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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

The 13th Door

BY · EDITH · SESSIONS · TUPPER ·

The Detective Story in No. 30 Will Be "THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW."

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY PAGE

THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper 1

SERIAL STORY

A COAT SLEEVE, by G. G. Small 38

SHORT STORIES

THAT ENGAGEMENT-RING TRICK, by C. T. Jordan 18
FASHIONABLE THIEVES, by Sergeant O'Brien 22
THE STRANGE CASE OF MRS. ST. LEON, by Beulah Poynter 25
SKELETON SAM'S OVERSIGHT, by Louis Schneider 28
STRATEGY, by A. D. Wingate 31
A BEAUTIFUL FIEND, by Police Lieutenant Kelly 34
A BEGGAR DETECTIVE, by Arthur Palmer Lingard 36

MISCELLANEOUS MATTER

High Heels a Detriment 17
X-Ray as a Detective 21
A Mysterious Sickness 27
Anti-Tank Gun Used by Our Men 33
Queer Footwear Developments 41

CURRENT NEWS

A Remarkable Sapphire—Regains Speech—Blind, Yet Operates—New Idea in Potato Growing—Origin of Toasts—Origin of "Old Glory"—Loss of Speech Cured by Anesthesia—A Gun That Will Shoot Into Space—Hornets at Dance—An Indian Relic—"Black Friday" Unlucky Day in Finance 42

THE THIRTEENTH DOOR

HOW A DETECTIVE SOLVED A STRANGE CASE

By EDITH SESSIONS TUPPER

CHAPTER ONE

A STRANGE MEETING

IT was a mystery to Valery why, having started to leave the St. Titus by the main entrance—it being nearer the subway and, therefore, better suiting his convenience—he suddenly wheeled about and headed for the south door. He had just finished interviewing Senator David Evans on the embargo bill and was in a rush to get to the office. But suddenly, without the slightest valid reason, he paused, turned, hesitated, then hastened toward the latter door on the threshold of which he ran plump into Frank Moon, whom he hadn't seen since the two were graduated from the same Columbia class; Moon to enter the government service, Valery to become a cub reporter on the *New York Typhoon*.

For one moment the two young men stared blankly at each other; then, with suppressed whoops of joy, grasped each other's hands and worked them overtime.

"Moon, by all that's holy," Valery gasped.

"Valery, old scout," Moon cried, "do you know I've been thinking of you for the last five minutes?"

"It must have been a wireless from you," Valery replied, "that turned me back from the main entrance and sent me here."

They moved along, chatting animatedly, to the hotel rotunda, thronged with the customary habitues. "What are you doing here?" Valery incidentally inquired. Moon merely winked in reply. The reporter realized at once that he had asked an indiscreet question and forthwith apologized.

"That's all right," Moon laughed. "I'm here on official business."

They secured a seat in a retired corner of the office and fell to reminiscencing. As they recalled certain college experiences the two exploded with laughter. People strolling past smiled sympathetically at their mirth. Among the throng came a splendidly groomed, well set-up chap, with the assured air that wealth and position bestows. He half-paused at sight of the reporter. "Hello, Valery," he called cheerily. "You seem to be having the time of your life, old top."

"I am, Stanton," laughed the reporter. "Just struck an old pal. Let me introduce"—the slightest pressure of Moon's foot on Valery's warned the latter to be discreet—"my friend, Mr.—Franklyn," he somewhat lamely concluded.

But Stanton did not mark the slight hesitation.

"Glad to know you, Mr. Franklyn." The newcomer extended an affable hand.

"Same here," responded Moon cordially.

"Mr. Stanton is James McIntosh Stanton," Valery casually said to Moon as the three men stood cursorily chatting.

"Of Bridgeton Munitions Works?" Moon asked, with an interested air.

"The same," Stanton replied.

"You're pretty busy these days, I take it," suggested Moon.

"Yes, we're turning out the stuff rapidly," Stanton responded. "I say, Bob," to Valery, "where are you going?"

"I'm due at the office this moment," Valery answered. "I had started for the sub when I banged into Franklyn here, and I just had to steal a few minutes' chat. We haven't seen each other in four years."

"Well, I mustn't interrupt the old folks' reunion," Stanton said good-humoredly. "I just wanted to say that if you will come up to Bridgeton in a day or so I may have a good story for you. I can tell you positively to-morrow night when I meet you at the Hoodoo Challengers."

"The Hoodoo Challengers!" cried Moon. "What in thunder's that?"

But before Stanton could reply to the question, the attention of the group was drawn to an extraordinary figure threading its way through the crowded rotunda. A man, whose age might have been anywhere between thirty and forty-five, erect, autocratic of bearing, with gleaming, lustrous black eyes, aquiline nose and masses of hair like black satin, approached them. The reporter at once recognized him.

"Here comes Ramba Chanterba," he said to his companions.

"Who's Ramba Chanterba?" questioned Stanton.

"An East Indian—a rajah—or yogi, or sirdar, or something of that sort," flippantly replied Valery. "He's studying English at Columbia. He's a character. I'll call him over." He bowed and beckoned to the striking figure. The East Indian courteously returned the salute and flashed a brilliant, dazzling smile at the group. "He is certainly a magnificent-looking creature," murmured Stanton as the Oriental approached.

"Gad! you should see him in his native costume with all his jewels," returned Valery. "He's something overwhelming. Hello, Ramba Chanterba, how goes it?"

"Ah—eet ees—my reporter," blandly responded the East Indian. He smiled again, showing glittering, sharp white teeth. "How stupide of me! I'm glad to meet you again, Meester Valerie."

"May I present my friends?" Valery mentioned their names and all saluted the newcomer, who shot a keen glance at Stanton as he shook his hand, a glance that struck Valery at once—so pregnant was it with startled interest and a tinge of distrust. But only for a fleeting moment, then a look of—what was it, sly malevolence?—took its place, but he saluted Stanton cordially. While they exchanged greetings, Valery chanced to look at Moon. Under the latter's veiling eyelids he was covertly studying the Oriental. Not a muscle of his impassive face moved, but some way Valery received the impression that Moon had more than a passing interest in the picturesque personality before him.

"Ramba Chanterba," Valery said casually, "we were just speaking of a club, the Hoodoo Challengers—that's an organization you ought to join."

"A formidable name," laughed Ramba Chanterba. "And how do you challenge the hoodoo, or fate—it all amounts to the same thing, does eet not?"

"It's like this," explained Valery. "A club of men and women, thirteen in number, has been formed to challenge superstition in every form. We defy all signs, omens and warnings. We meet semi-monthly and at each meeting a member appointed at the previous meeting is bound to relate a thrilling experience encountered in defiance of some popular superstition."

"Why, thees is most interesting," cried the Oriental genially. "I should indeed like to join such a club. But—you say—thirteen members? Is your roster filled?"

"Yes, at present," replied the reporter. "You would have to wait for the resignation of some member."

"Resignation—or, perhaps, death," suggested Ramba Chanterba in his slow, musical, droning voice.

"Why—er—yes," slowly agreed Valery, "although I hadn't considered the latter—possibility. Naturally, you see, we all expect to live forever."

"Of course." He flashed his glittering, wolfish teeth at Valery.

"It's my friend Stanton's turn now to thrill us," the reporter went on. "The club meets to-morrow night and we look forward to some peculiarly startling adventure."

"You won't be disappointed," broke in Stanton, drawing out his watch as he spoke and glancing at it. "I assure you I'll have something unique for the club."

"I bet you don't show up at all," laughed Valery.

"Valery," responded Stanton emphatically, as he slowly restored his watch to his pocket, "I'll be there if I'm alive. You can gamble on that, old man."

Moon suddenly spoke. "What a remarkable ornament you have on your fob, Mr. Stanton."

Stanton at once extended it for Moon's inspection. "It's an Indian idol ornament dug up in Central America on the shore of Chiriqui lagoon," replied Stanton. "Just an odd little fancy. I picked it up down at Panama."

Both Ramba Chanterba and Moon bent to examine the trinket closely. "Well," cried Stanton, "I must be on my way. I've a dinner engagement and a theater party. Glad to have met you all." He lifted his hat and moved away—a strong, dominant figure, the incarnation of life and vitality.

"Don't forget—to-morrow night," Valery called after him. Stanton turned and laughingly waved his hat. "I repeat that I'll be there—if I am alive!" he gaily cried. Then he passed through the swinging-door and was lost to their view.

"What a splendid young man," murmured the Oriental. "Such strength, such virility, such spirits! I—I"—he hesitated for an instant—"I thought when I first saw him—he was—that is—I mistook him for some one else—but I quickly saw my error. I thought him the great munitions manufacturer."

Moon's eyelids fluttered slightly. He shot a warning glance at Valery as he passed his hand across his forehead with a slightly fatigued air. "I shall be obliged to say good-by to you gentlemen," he said gently. "I am pressed for time. Very glad to have met you. Good-by, Bob. I'll see you soon again, I hope." He started to leave them; then, as if on second thought, he wheeled. "One word, Bob," he said. Valery went toward him. "Don't tell the Oriental," Moon whispered, "that Stanton is the munitions man."

Ramba Chanterba walked along with Valery to the hotel entrance and across Broadway to the subway station. Then they parted. Valery saw the East Indian swing along down the crowded thoroughfare—a distinguished, commanding figure. The reporter was just turning to descend the subway stairs when, carelessly glancing across the street, to his intense amazement, he saw Moon in the doorway of a cigar-shop peering stealthily after the retreating figure of the Oriental.

"Now, what in the mischief," Valery said to himself, "is Frank up to? And why did he request me not to tell Ramba Chanterba who Stanton is?" Suddenly he recalled the impression he had received of Moon's guarded interest in the East Indian. "He is watching him for some reason," he thought. "But why? What possible motive? Oh, well, it's not my affair. I'd better get to the office with my belated interview. Moon and Stanton and Ramba Chanterba are all interesting—an unusual combination, but I can't spend any more time and thought on them."

Valery hastened to the office of the *Typhoon* and set to work pounding his typewriter.

His story was about finished when Tim, the office boy, called him to the 'phone. "That you, Bob?" came a deep, musical voice.

"You bet," Valery promptly replied. "How are you, Jean?"

"All right," the voice of Jean Grosvenor rejoined. "Just called up to say hello. Are you busy?"

"Just closing up my story. Not so busy that I can't run up to see you this evening," Valery ventured.

There was an instant's hesitancy, then: "Awfully sorry, old scout, but I'm going out to dinner and then to a theater party."

"With Stanton," Valery said to himself, a curious, sharp little pang tearing at his heart. "Of course, I might have known." Aloud he merely replied: "That's nice for you but—death on me."

"Never mind, Bob," was the cheering answer. "I'll see you at the club to-morrow night. You—you may call for me—if it pleases your lordship."

"If it pleases me," gasped Valery. "I say, Jean, you're a darling——"

"Tut-tut," reprovingly, "no names, please. That's not pretty over the 'phone. All right then—to-morrow night. Good-by." A click—the receiver was hung up.

Valery returned to his typewriter in an uplifted mental state. "I shall have her all to myself," was his first exultant thought. Then like an ice-shower came the revulsion. "She only gives me that privilege because Stanton can't take her. He'll be out on his wild hoodoo adventure. Confound Stanton!" very savagely. "I like him too—every one does—can't help it. I'm not wishing him any harm, but if he should fall out of a seventeenth-story window and break his cussed neck I shouldn't put on a mourning-band for him."

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAN IN THE BOX

JEAN GROSVENOR sat in her tiny apartment waiting the advent of Valery. She was a lithe, graceful girl of about twenty-one, with brown velvet eyes, an impertinent nose and hair the color of ripe corn. Her beauty was undeniable, but there was more than physical charm about the girl. Mentally brilliant and alert, she was known in her world as a clever and fascinating writer of fiction and special stories. Her pen earned her a good steady income, but she was always looking forward to the time when she might venture to try her hand at novels and plays. Ambitious she was, but not for money itself. She was eager to create—to accomplish results. She was a fair type of the keen, wide-awake young American woman who hitches her wagon to a star and longs to travel on the wings of the lightning.

Jean realized that Jim Stanton was desperately in love with her. From the day she had gone to Bridgeton to interview him for an evening paper, she had known of her attraction for the young millionaire. She recognized the fact that she had but to give him his opportunity and he would speak. It would be a great social triumph for the girl, who three years before had come from an obscure Iowa town into the seething maelstrom of New York life. She would forsake her ambitions in a blaze of glory—she would have a town- and country-house, a yacht, a limousine, jewels and a continuous wardrobe performance. Still, with this enchanting vista opening up before her, Jean hesitated.

Was she in love with Stanton, she often asked herself? She reveled in his devotion. It was very delightful to have her plain little apartment transformed into a bower of beauty by a lavish offering of orchids and violets. It was heavenly to glide through the crowded streets in a luxurious car instead of madly scrambling into an overpacked trolley. Stanton was young, fine-looking and sweet-tempered—generous to a degree. But—here Jean always paused and drew a long breath. She tried to analyze her emotions. She looked forward to thirty, forty, perhaps fifty, years of Stanton's companionship. Did she want that? And when she arrived at this point, she always rose and resolutely drowned her reflections in her ink-bottle. "I am not ready to marry any one," she would murmur to herself. "I want to do things. I want to live, to experience joy, sorrow, undergo vicissitudes—danger, perhaps. I shall not decide to-day."

And so she deftly held her admirer at arms' length. Always sweet and deferential, she yet maintained an indifference and reserve that piqued Stanton, who had been chased for years by frantic mothers who hoped to claw him and his millions for their marketable daughters. Jean always diplomatically managed to have a friend with her when Stanton came. When he invited her out, it was always understood that there must be others included. The girl never dined or supped *tête-à-tête* with her admirer. This prudence and indifference fanned Stanton's love to white-hot passion. Moreover, he saw the looks of admiration cast upon the girl by every man with whom she came in contact. He saw poor Valery's hopeless, dog-like devotion and smiled at its impossibility.

"Poor old chap," he muttered. "Valery couldn't support her. Imagine that young princess in a Harlem flat. Preposterous! She's got to marry money, and why not me? I've only to keep up the siege and in time the citadel will yield."

Jean sat thinking over the events of the evening before —the wonderful dinner at a famous café, the theater party and then the cabaret supper, the delicacies, the wines, the flowers and Stanton's absolute and florid devotion. Then suddenly she thought of something else—the man in the box across the theater! The man who had watched her all the evening. Who was he, she wondered? He had sauntered in, a wonderfully startling and picturesque figure in evening things—a man who would be marked in any assemblage. Directly he had taken his seat and swept the house with his great slumberous eyes, he had seen her. All the evening she was conscious of his cool, scrutinizing, appraising regard. It was as if he were valuing her attractions. A hot resentment flooded her consciousness as she recalled his survey—the tampering sweep of his eyes over her figure. Later, in the crush in the foyer, she was startled to find him close at her side. Again he had given her that sliding, plundering side-glance. She felt his tremendous personality thrill her with magnetic force. Instinctively she clung closer to Stanton's arm, thereby causing that young man to press her confiding hand in an excess of delirious joy.

She was surprised to see the picturesque unknown salute Stanton and the latter bow in return. She had meant to ask her escort who the stranger was, but refrained from motives of prudence. She did not care to have Stanton think she was in the slightest degree interested in the unknown.

But now his face rose again before her—a wonderfully arrogant, fascinating face. The girl shivered a bit as she thought of it, then rose quickly as the bell pealed to greet Valery, who came boyishly breezing into the room, both hands outstretched.

Valery was the exact opposite of Stanton in physical appearance. He was as lean as a greyhound, but extremely muscular. His face was keen and thin, but his jaw was pugnacious. His hazel eyes, usually hidden by large horn-rimmed spectacles, giving him an appearance of owlish wisdom, were at times filled with whimsical lights, although mostly grave and serious. For the rest he was clean-shaven and wholesome, dressed rather negligently. He was a type of young American seen on any street in any city in the country.

"Well, how is the Queen of Sheba?" was his characteristic greeting as Jean met him with her adorable smile. "You are growing such a 'sassiety' lady, I feel I am quite out of your class."

"Nonsense!" Jean laughed. "You drivel rather more than usual, Bob. I am no society girl."

"Um-hum!" retorted Valery. "Dining with swells last night and a theater party, with now and then a cabaret thrown in. Miss Grosvenor, you dissemble."

"I had a mighty good time, Bob——"

"Oh, of course, of course," he groaned. "Slathers of American beauties, luxurious car, popping corks—the usual program. I say, Jean, when do you get time to do your work?"

"Don't you worry," returned the girl, with some spirit. "I get my stuff out on time all right."

"I might now deliver a homily on burning the candle at both ends," Valery said to the walls of the room, "but to what avail? I should only be squelched for my pains. The more fool you, Bob Valery. So, hold the tongue."

Jean laughed musically. "Dear, cross, preachy, funny old Bob," she said. "No one can be vexed with you. I'll tell you right now, my friend, that I'm going to reform."

"Hear, hear," from Valery

"I'm going to cut out all these midnight orgies and tend to my knitting. You'll see." She nodded her pretty head sagely.

"Then," cried Valery eagerly, a great hope springing up in his heart, "you—are not"—he paused abruptly as Jean lifted her soft brown eyes to his with a glance that made his head reel—"you are not going—into the munitions business?" he whimsically finished.

"Not at present, Bob," Jean replied, with a droll little smile. "I must have my fling at work first. Later"—she shot him a side-glance—"we shall see."

Valery's heart went down like lead. She was, then, doubtless going to marry Stanton some day. "Oh," he thought as he held Jean's coat for her, "what an unspeakable ass I am! What possible show could I have against him, his good looks, his position and, above all, his millions?"

He was so grave and taciturn on their way to the club-rooms that Jean rallied him, "Why, Bob, child, wake up and enliven me. What on earth is the matter with you?"

"I don't know," Valery replied, passing his hand wearily across his forehead. "I'm not myself to-night. I—I—have a queer feeling—a—a—sort of premonition—that some awful thing is going to happen."

Jean rippled and dimpled. "A fine Hoodoo Challenger!" she cried gaily. "I shall be forced to report you to the club and see that you are properly disciplined."

"Jean," said Valery, pausing at the entrance of the club-rooms, "I don't understand this at all. But something weighs upon—oppresses me. I have a feeling—that—that"—he stammered, but held himself sternly in check—"that before we go out of here something—— Oh, what rubbish am I talking? Go on, dear. Don't mind me. I'm a bit nutty, I reckon."

The door to the club-rooms swung open and the newcomers were greeted with shouts of welcoming joy.

CHAPTER THREE

THE APPOINTED HOUR

IT was a gruesome room they entered. The walls were hung with black cambric and the table was spread with a sable cloth. In the center, instead of flowers, stood a miniature coffin in which lay a toy skeleton. At each cover was a grinning skull from whose eyeless sockets blinked electric lights with wicked effect. The waiters were all garbed as undertakers and handed viands and wines on servers trimmed with crape.

But if the appointments were doleful, the club members were not. Ten of the brightest, gayest, liveliest spirits in all New York surrounded Jean and Valery with whoops of delight. All reserve was cast aside. "Here's to death!" shouted Dave Marble, a brilliant cartoonist, waving his champagne-glass at the newcomers.

"Here's to the grave!" supplemented Sara Floyd, a young actress. "It's such a nice, cold, wormy retreat!"

Everybody joked, chatted, screamed and toasted. It was a bedlam. "What a lot of degenerates we are," growled Valery. "Do you know this sort of thing gets on my nerves to-night? I wonder why? Heretofore it seemed like a good game, but I don't like it a little bit."

"Here's a recreant Hoodoo Challenger," cried Jean gaily. "Bob's got cold feet. He's scared of something."

A terrible din arose. Club members beat on their plates with spoons, knives and forks and sang a dreadful ditty. "Down among the dead men you shall go!" aiming their

spoons at Valery. At first the reporter made an effort to conjure up a grin at the unwelcome attention, but at last gave way to his disgust. "Hang it all!" he roared. "You all act like a lot of demons. I've a good mind to hand in my resignation now."

He was so nettled—so unlike his usual whimsical, agreeable self that every one was startled. "What's the matter with its Bobbums?" cried Molly Dare, a young futurist artist. "He has a bad case of grouch."

"No," said Valery and he banged on the table with his clenched fist for silence. "No, I haven't a grouch, but I'm going to tell you that I've got a premonition——" But he was shut off by a chorus of derisive yells and catcalls. The other eleven members of the club rose and marched around the table groaning as if in great pain and altogether conducting themselves in a reprehensibly outrageous manner.

After a while they wearied of this tomfoolery and began to make speeches and toasts to pass away the time until midnight, for it was the accepted custom for the thirteenth member to make his entrance at twelve o'clock for dramatic effect.

Valery kept glancing at the clock on the mantel. He found himself wondering where Stanton was. "I'll be there—if I am alive!" the latter had said as he left his friend the day before. The phrase rang in Valery's consciousness like a solemn bell. "I wonder why he said that?" Valery asked himself over and over. What especially hazardous adventure had Stanton undertaken? As the hands of the clock pointed to five minutes of midnight, Valery suddenly experienced a frightful sensation. His heart seemed to stop beating. He moistened his lips with his dry tongue and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with a shaking hand as he drank his champagne. "Will the infernal clock never strike midnight?" he asked him ferociously. "Will that door never open and show Stanton's wholesome, genial face laughing in at us? Four—three—two—one minute of twelve!" Valery counted. And now the deep-toned cathedral chime boomed out the appointed hour.

Every one stopped gabbing, jesting and love-making and looked expectantly toward the door. Dave Marble broke the silence by lifting his glass high and bawling:

"Here's to the dead already! And hurrah for the next that dies."

And then—the door slowly swung open. "Here's Stanton now," some one shouted and then stopped abruptly, for only the black void of the hall beyond was visible. There was no one there!

For an instant stupefaction reigned. Then, "Stanton, you old ruffian," Arthur Rawdon, the playwright, yelled, "come on in! Don't try any fool-game on us——" He never finished his sentence, for a cald, clammy blast, like the icy breath of a specter, was wafted through the empty doorway, across the heated room to the head of the table where Stanton's vacant chair was waiting for him. "What—what is that?" some one stammered. Sara Floyd screamed. "Hush!" said Jean Grosvenor, who had grown very pale.

"Did you feel that cold wave?" sobbed the actress hysterically. "Oh, something has happened to Stanton—an accident." But Valery, Dave Marble and one or two others now leaped to the door. They hurriedly searched the hall and ran down the stairs to the street, hoping to find Stanton's car drawn up before the entrance and the joker laughing at them for a lot of scareheads. But no car—no Stanton!

For an hour the suddenly sobered club sat waiting. They spoke in low, tense tones and avoided each other's eyes. The contagion of fear had laid its deadly hand upon them all. "Why doesn't he come—why doesn't he come?" Jean Grosvenor distressfully demanded.

"I'll be there if I'm alive!" resounded over and over in Valery's shocked brain. "If I am alive!" Could it be possible that brilliant, chivalrous, lovable man was lying dead somewhere? Had his soul made one desperate last attempt to keep its rendezvous with its friends?

"He will come, Jean," Valery kept saying reassuringly to the ashen-lipped girl beside him. "He will come. Something has detained him. He will come breezing in presently and have a big laugh on us." But all the time he said to himself, "He will never come. Some awful thing has happened.

One o'clock struck. Valery suddenly rose. "I'm going to 'phone police headquarters," he said as calmly as he could. "Of course, I'm sure it can all be explained in time. But it's just as well to make a report and get the wheels rolling." He gave Jean a sympathetic glance as he went out. Her white, startled face followed him down the stairs. "Poor girl!" he thought. "How she loved him! He was a lovable chap." And suddenly he realized that he was already speaking of Stanton in the past tense.

The club broke up at three o'clock, trying to comfort itself with the knowledge that already detectives were out looking for Stanton. "They'll find him—sure!" Valery stoutly declared to Jean as he gently led her away. They did not speak on the way home, so absorbed were both in their own somber reflections.

"Buck up, girl!" Valery said as he bade Jean goodnight. "Try to sleep. We'll all laugh at this to-morrow."

"Oh, Bob," cried Jean, laying her clasped hands impulsively on Valery's arm. "I—I—don't know. I—I—hope he's all right somewhere. But, Bob, your strange premonition and that terrible cold, chilling wave of air! What does it mean? I'm not superstitious as a rule, but I can't explain that—can you?"

"Why, Jean dear, some one opened the downstairs door just at the instant and the draft came up at the psychological moment. That's all there is to that," Valery returned briskly. "As for my fool premonition—that is absolutely nothing. I'm always having a hunch and my hunches are the worst bluffs you could possibly imagine. Now, I'll 'phone you first thing in the morning. I'm going to headquarters and see the reporters. I'll surely have some good news for you, girl." And trying thus to cheer his friend, Valery made off hurriedly, knowing in his heart that he was lying—whistling to keep up his courage. "I'll be there if I'm alive!" still tolled in his ear as he strode along the deserted, silent streets. Stanton was dead, he knew, but where—where was he?

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT THE DAWN DISCLOSED

FRANK MOON had been up all night, in conference with his aids, receiving reports and issuing orders. The gray autumnal dawn came drifting across the windows of the office followed by scarlet shafts of light. Moon lifted his tired eyes from a pile of papers and glanced over at Pat Glennon, a stockily built, red-faced detective who sat chewing a cigar. "Thank the Lord,"

Moon praised, "that's fixed. Now, Pat, you listen to me. We neither feel like sleep at present. You get a taxi and we'll slip up Riverside and the boulevard and get breakfast at the Arrow and then go to bed—what?"

"Suits me," said Glennon tersely.

There were very few people astir yet. Moon sat back in the taxi smoking a cigarette, idly gazing out at the great river, silver in the rays of the rising sun, trying to banish all thought of his strenuous night. The Secret Service man was a hard worker, but when he rested he gave himself up to that luxury. His cigarette finished, he flung the butt out the taxi window. "Give me another cigarette, Pat," he said to his companion; "mine are all gone."

"This is my last," responded Glennon with a grimace.

Moon uttered an exclamation of annoyance and signaled the chauffeur. "Drop down around the gas-tank neighborhood," he ordered. "We're out of cigarettes. Perhaps we can get some at a drug store if the cigar stores are not open."

They fortunately found a sleepy-eyed druggist, who supplied them with cigarettes. The taxi turned and struck back through a tangle of frowsy streets to the clear air of the Hudson and rolled on toward the boulevard. They were now passing a vacant lot piled with heaps of loose stones and filled with pools of muddy, slimy water, when suddenly a man plunged headlong from this lot with a face so livid, so horror-stricken that Moon shouted to the chauffeur to stop and, leaping from the taxi, caught the man by the shoulder. "What's the matter with you?" he demanded.

The man's face worked in frightful fashion. He tried to speak, but could only babble and stammer incoherently. His hands clutched frantically at Moon's coat. He seemed to have lost his reason. "Can't you speak?" bawled Glennon, who by this time had joined Moon.

The man with one frenzied effort panted out: "Man—dead—there."

"Where?"

"In the lot—was coming across—and fell over the body." He shuddered and groaned. "It gave me an awful turn."

"Come back here and show us," ordered Moon.

The three presently stood looking at an inert mass lying face down on a pile of sharp stones. Moon quickly noted that the dead man's clothing was of fine material and fashionable cut. "Pat," he said shortly, "send the chauffeur back for an officer. Get one here as quickly as possible."

Within ten minutes the chauffeur appeared with a big policeman. Moon quickly explained the affair and showed his badge. It chanced that the officer and Pat Glennon knew each other. The workman who had found the body sat on a stone near by, quite nauseated. "Oh, Lord. Oh, Lord," he gibbered.

"Shot all to pieces," said Glennon, nodding toward him. "Fell plump over the body and can't seem to get over the shock."

"Shure 'tis a gintleman by the look of his gar-r-r-ments," observed the officer. "'Tis crool-like to lave him on thim stones, but we darn't touch him till the coroner is after comin'. Mr. Moon, sor, sind your man to No. — 186th street for Dr. Malone. 'Tis himself is the medical examiner for this disthrict."

The three men remained until Moon's chauffeur returned with the physician, who gave them permission to remove the limp body from the pile of stones and lay it out on the grass. The face was battered to a pulp by the violence with which the dead man had fallen upon the stones. It was an awful sight.

Moon's keen eyes traveled from the shapeless, crushed features over the fine shirt and the fashionable tweed clothing. Suddenly, with an inarticulate exclamation, he bent and drew up the fob of the dead man's watch. "Look," he said tensely, "look at this ornament, Dr. Malone. You see what an odd thing it is. Well, I saw this ornament on a man two afternoons ago in the rotunda of the Hotel St. Titus! Unless I am absolutely mistaken, this is James McIntosh Stanton, the big munitions manufacturer. If it is—he has been murdered!"

As gently as possible Valery broke the dreadful news to Jean Grosvenor over the 'phone. He heard her horrified cry and then a choked sob. "Oh, poor Jim—poor Jim," she cried.

"Jean dear," said Valery sympathetically. "I will come to you as soon as I can. But we're right up against the story now and I've got to stop here until the extras are out. Try to be brave, little girl."

The eminent physicians and surgeons who had been hastily summoned came out of the room wherein the dead man lay. They were instantly surrounded by the reporters, who were eagerly waiting their opinion. "As near as we can determine by a hasty preliminary examination," their spokesman said in answer to a volley of questions, "Mr. Stanton has been dead between nine and ten hours. We agree that he met his death some time between eleven-thirty and midnight."

"How was he killed?"

"Ah, that we can't tell you! There is no bullet or knife wound, and we find no external symptoms of poison. What an autopsy may disclose remains to be seen."

Moon and Valery stood looking at the battered body of the man whom they had seen in perfect health and vigor only forty-eight hours before. Valery's heart was wrung with anguish. He had been genuinely fond of Stanton and now the memory of that last conversation returned to him with poignant memory. "Oh, Frank," he murst out to Moon, "if it hadn't been for that fool club and its damnable crazy ideas, Stanton might now be alive. Poor chap—poor dear old chap!"

"Valery," asked Moon quietly, "why should Stanton have gone way up on the Washington Boulevard in search of an adventure?"

"God only knows," groaned Valery. "It's what I've been asking myself over and over. And how did he get there? If he went in his car, his chauffeur would have known it."

"He never went in his car," said Moon thoughtfully. "He never walked up there to that lonely spot at night——"

"No—o," agreed Moon. "No, I think not."

"Then how in Heaven's name——?" began Valery, but Moon suddenly interrupted him.

"See here, Bob," he said, "what do you make of this?" He was scrutinizing the dead man's wrist. He lifted it as he spoke and pointed to some small purplish-red spots. Valery bent and gazed closely.

"Curious marks," he muttered. "I wonder if the doctors noticed them?"

"You can't tell," returned Moon. "They are not giving away all they know."

"What do you make of them?" asked Valery.

"They look like the bite of something," replied Moon. "Of course, some insect may have stung him as he lay in the lot. I'm going to see Dr. Gresham, who had charge here, and ask him if he remarked these spots. If not, I'll get him to come back with me and look at them."

The dreadful, interminable day dragged along to its close. The entire city was talking of the shocking death of this man so prominent in social and business circles. The peculiar conditions—the adventurous circumstances under which he had died, the lonely location so far from his accustomed haunts—all furnished an extraordinary and dramatic setting to the story.

Valery had been rushed to death all day, but at last, about nine o'clock, he got where he could go to Jean Grosvenor. He found her very composed, silent, repressing her grief. She asked a few questions and Valery, trying to spare her all horrible details, answered as best he could.

"Do you think he was murdered?" She put the interrogation flatly, after a few moments of beating about the bush.

Valery hesitated. "Jean," he said, "I don't know. I fear he was, but by whom is a profound mystery. What puzzles every one—detectives and newspaper men—is what on earth was Stanton doing way up in that unfrequented place? If he was searching for adventure, why did he go there?"

There was a profound silence in the little room. Jean was sitting by the open fire. The light of the flames lit up her white, suffering face. Her great eyes seemed to deepen and grow more somber and mysterious as she gazed in the fire. Suddenly she spoke in a curious, restrained voice—a voice quite unlike her own: "He—never—went—there—of—his—own will," she said. A thrill shot through Valery. "Jean," he cried, "what do you mean?"

She lifted her heavy eyelids and regarded him strangely. "Come closer to me, Bob," she said in a low tone. "I—I—have something to tell you. I promised—I would not—but that pledge—was made to—the living. Now—I must speak—for the dead."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE UNSEEN INFLUENCE.

"HE was sitting there," Jean whispered, pointing to the hearth. "He had brought Molly Dare and me home from the theater party. Molly was dead with sleep and had gone to her room. Jim was lighting his cigarette. I can see him now as he bent over it"—she paused for a moment and put her hand to her throat as if to choke back a sob, then went on: "He chuckled to himself—you know Bob, that little knowing chuckle—and he said, 'Well, Jean, there's no one in the Hoodoo Challenger's that's going to put anything over on your Uncle Dudley. I've cut out the most unique stunt you ever dreamed of. It's this way: I propose to defy the thirteenth superstition. Tomorrow night, at ten o'clock, I'm going to leave my rooms, walk thirteen blocks, turn down the side street, ring the bell at the door of the thirteenth house—and see what will happen.'

"'Jim Stanton,' I exclaimed, 'you are crazy. Why! you might run into some dreadful danger.'

"He shouted with laughter. 'There you go!' he cried. 'You're just as superstitious as they make them. It's that awful thirteen that frightens you. Oh, Jean, I thought you above all such nonsense.'

"'You are wrong,' I retorted. 'I am not superstitious, but the thought of walking into a strange house late at night is what appals me. The people may resent it and throw you out—pound you to a jelly perhaps.'

"Again he laughed. 'And what would I be doing meantime?' he demanded. 'I reckon I can take care of myself. It's lovely of you to worry a little bit for me, but I'm perfectly able to defend myself under any conditions. I mean to blow this silly thirteen superstition to kingdom-come.'

"He made me promise faithfully that I would not tell his plans to any one. And I gave my pledge. But now, Bob, I feel I must speak. You can make whatever use you think best of this information. It may possibly lead to the discovery of the murderer."

Valery's brain was working swiftly. "Jean," he asked hastily, "did he say which way he should go—up or down town?"

"He didn't tell me that," replied the girl, "and I was so upset over his ill-advised plan, I didn't think to ask him more. Ah! if I only had insisted on his being more explicit."

"Even if he went up-town," mused Valery, "thirteen blocks would never have taken him anywhere near Washington Boulevard."

"No," agreed Jean. "No, that is all a mystery. He may have enraged the people in the thirteenth house—they may have beaten him—and carried him where he was found."

"Yes," responded Valery, "that's a plausible theory. You have given me a lead, Jean. I must go at once to Frank Moon, who is going to help the detective bureau in unraveling the mystery. This information, dear girl, may be the key that will unlock the thirteenth door."

Valery bade Jean a hasty good-night and started to go down to the hotel where Moon was stopping. He had promised the Secret Service man he would be there late. But when he came to the corner of the street on which stood the big bachelor apartments in which Stanton owned a suite, an extraordinary sensation suddenly obsessed him. He was impelled to go to these apartments. He hesitated—then started on his original way. Again came the strange, inexplicable influence drawing him toward his dead friend's rooms. Once more he paused, turned and, berating himself for a fool, obeyed the impulse. Presently he stood before the entrance to the Arundel Arms. Valery found himself sub-consciously considering Stanton's place, to think as the dead man had thought. Mechanically, he put his hand in his pocket and drew out a penny. "Heads up!" he said, "tails down!"

He flipped the penny—it jingled on the pavement at his feet. He stooped, picked it up and, by the arc light over the entrance to the apartment house, saw he had turned the tail of the coin. Again he hesitated. Then as he slowly returned the penny to his pocket he started down the street. He strode on as if in a dream. Block after block slipped by. At last he had covered the thirteen. "What an ass I am!" he said as he approached the corner. "I shan't know whether to turn to the left or right. I've wasted all this time."

But when he came to the corner, he saw that if he turned to the left, he would pass a long block of unlighted

office buildings. If, however, he should go to the right, he would pass a row of dwellings. He therefore chose that course.

He had counted the houses, and now he stood before the flight of steps leading to the thirteenth door. Was it up that flight that his friend went to his doom? Valery stood regarding the house. It was the typical brown-stone front, four-storied New York dwelling. There was no light visible save in the hall and on the fourth floor.

Valery went slowly up the steps, intending merely to get the number of the house. But the spirit of adventure had obsessed him. "What if I were to push this button?" he asked himself as he stood in the vestibule. He put his finger on the button automatically. Suddenly the bell pealed.

Even then Valery would have turned and bolted, but a spirit of bravado suddenly seized him. "I'll ask some fool questions and apologize," he said. The door swung open instantly. A man—evidently a servant—stood before him. The light in the hall was very dim. "Does Mr.——" Valery began. The man spoke quietly, "Yes, he is expecting you. Please enter."

"I'll just step in," thought Valery, "and glance about. I can say I've made a mistake."

He went in. The door closed behind him. And then suddenly heaven and earth seemed to come together with a crash.

Jean Grosvenor was in a highly excited mental condition after Valery's departure. Over and over she relived the last conversation she had with Stanton and which she had rehearsed to the reporter. She felt Stanton's presence—she seemed to see him sitting before the fireplace, lighting his cigarette and ridiculing her fears. He was gone! That kind, chivalrous, gallant man who had loved and respected her—hurled out into the great unknown. And yet he did not seem far away. She moved restlessly about her little reception room and paused at length before Stanton's photograph on the mantel. He was looking straight at her with his frank, fearless gaze. Jean regarded the picture with mournful eyes. "Oh, my friend, my friend," she murmured, "how good you were—how thoughtful—how considerate always. If I had only known, I might have been kinder to you. If I—could only—do something now to avenge you."

She found herself in her little bedroom absently donning her rough tweed coat and sport hat. The latter she pulled well down over her ears. She took a small purse and a pair of gloves and, lowering her night lamp, went quietly out and stole down the stairway and so on out to the street.

She had counted the thirteen blocks up from Stanton's apartments. It was a whim, she kept telling herself—just a desire to see if she could find a suspicious-appearing place in which her dead friend might have ventured. Now, as she came to the corner, she paused uncertainly even as Valery had an hour before in the down-town locality. 'I'll try the right-hand first," she decided. But when she reached the thirteenth door, she saw a house ablaze with lights, an awning stretched across the pavement and numerous luxurious cars parked in front. "This can't possibly be the house," she reflected. She turned and resolutely took her way back to the corner, hesitated but a second and then crossed the street and went on down the left-hand.

She paused before a darkened house. Not a light was visible. "Possibly," she thought, "there may be a name on the door. I'm going to look." She went up the steps, and as she reached the vestibule discovered, to her intense surprise, that the door was partly open!

Scarce realizing what she was doing, Jean stepped into the darkened hall. She could just make out a winding stairway. She paused and listened. Not a sound broke the dense silence which surrounded and enveloped her like a black pall. The girl stood hardly daring to breathe, so amazed was she at her own temerity. Suddenly a terrible agitation seized her. Her limbs quivered and her tongue seemed palsied, for she distinctly heard the thud of soft footsteps behind her.

With one desperate plunge she ran up to the second story. Pausing an instant, she heard the hall door close stealthily, then the padding of feet on the stairs behind her.

Now fear lent her wings. She flew through the upper hall and reached the lower steps of the stairs leading to the third story. But she got no farther, for some one seized her in a steely grasp, a hand was pressed heavily over her mouth and she was dragged back a few feet and pushed through a door into a room. She heard the door close and the sound of a key turned in the lock. She was securely trapped!

The room was in pitchy darkness, but Jean, by carefully stealing about, made out a huge bed, a great dressing-table set between two windows, which, to her horror, she discovered were iron-barred. No hope of smashing the windows and screaming for help. By feeling her way along the wall she discovered opposite the windows two doors, one leading into a closet, the other alongside it being locked. She came to the conclusion that this last door led to a tiny passage as in most city houses, and that she was imprisened in a second-story back room, which surmise she discovered later to be correct.

She found a chair near by and sat down to collect and adjust her scattered mental forces. She had not now the slightest doubt but that she was in the same house in which Stanton had met his doom. She was face to face with some deadly peril. "What shall I do?" she asked herself. She realized that she had left no trace behind of her midnight adventure. No one could find her until—she shuddered as she thought of her lifeless body lying out in some lonely spot battered perhaps beyond recognition. And even as she contemplated her probable fate, she saw a gleam of light under the door she judged led into the passage-way. Then followed the click of a key and this door swung open. Light streamed in from the room at the front of the house.

In this doorway stood an extraordinary and formidable figure.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DISCOVERIES OF MOON

"YOU think, then, that Stanton may have come to his death in that fashion?" Moon tentatively questioned.

Dr. Alfred Gresham, a great medical authority, regarded the Secret Service man thoughtfully. "It may be," he replied. "Certainly, the theory is not untenable. At first suggestion it appeared grotesque, but I assure you, Mr.

Moon, after this examination I am inclined to the belief that there may be something i nyour idea."

The two men were locked in Moon's office. Dr. Gresham had come there after a second examination of Stanton's body at the station house. He had listened gravely to Moon's confidences and theories. "It is a remarkable thesis you have," he said, "and, from your viewpoint, quite feasible. I am going to my office now to consult certain authorities on the subject and will 'phone you later. Meantime, you have, as you say, certain premises to establish. Should you fix such premises absolutely, they will go a long way toward substantiating your theory. Let me hear from you as soon as possible."

"Yes, doctor, should I not hear from you I will 'phone, or, better still, I will call at your office toward night," returned Moon.

After the physician's departure Moon sat for some time in a brown study, playing abstractedly with papers on his desk and smoking furiously. At length he rang and demanded of the subordinate who responded, "Is Glennon here?" Receiving an affirmative reply, he ordered the man to send the detective in.

The big burly detective lumbered in and sat down by Moon's desk. "Orders?" he briefly asked.

"Yes," said Moon. "I want you, Pat, to go at once and search every garage in the neighborhood of that address," he handed Glennon a bit of paper as he spoke. "I want you to find the chauffeur who drove a taxi containing three men from that address last night between eleven and twelve, up to the locality where we found the body this morning."

Glennon stared at Moon as if hypnotized. "For the love Mike!" he ejaculated, "have you got a clue already?"

"I don't know," replied Moon quickly, "but I'm going to find out. Make a thorough search, Pat. If you want another man, all right, although I prefer you should conduct the search alone. Report here by five o'clock, if not before. Wait for me if I'm not back."

Moon left the office, and going to a neighboring Western Union, sent a wire to Bridgeton, Conn. Then, calling a taxi, he gave instructions to the chauffeur and was whirled downtown, in and out of narrow, sordid streets, until at last the taxi paused before a dirty little two-story shop down by the water front. Moon alighted, strolled up to the window and glanced in. Evidently satisfied with what he saw there, he entered the place.

In a few moments he came out, a smile curling the corners of his firm lips. He leaped into the taxi and was driven rapidly back to his office. In about an hour after a wire from Bridgeton was brought him. He read it with the utmost interest and satisfaction. "Going some!" he muttered to himself. "Now, for Pat's report and a 'phone from Gresham."

The 'phone suddenly tinkled. Moon took down the receiver. "This is Gresham," a voice came over the wire. "I find that your hypothesis is not only possible but highly probable."

"Thanks," said Moon, laconically, "and, doubtless, you will be interested to hear, doctor, that I have just substantiated it quite to my own satisfaction."

"I am not only interested but very glad, and heartily congratulate you," was the answer.

Moon glanced at his watch. It was three o'clock, and he had not yet lunched. So, leaving a message for Glennon, he went out to get a steak and coffee. In the restaurant he ran across Valery, who was just quitting a table. "Hello!" the latter said. "Wish I could stop for a chat, but I've got to get back to the office. I must finish my story. I want to get uptown to pay a visit of condolence to the young lady whom Stanton was to marry. She is anxiously expecting me."

"Indeed!" Moon responded. "And what time can you come to my hotel? I want very much to see you."

"I'll be there by ten o'clock," said Valery, as if considering. "I shan't be with Miss Grosvenor so very long, and will come straight down from there."

"Miss Jean Grosvenor, the writer?" asked Moon. "Was she to marry Stanton?"

"Yes," returned Valery, "the engagement had not been announced, but everyone understood it was a settled arrangement. Well, so long. I'll see you then at ten this evening."

Moon returned to his office after luncheon. He consumed two or three cigars, walking up and down the room, thinking, planning, systematizing his program. About 4 o'clock he heard Glennon's voice in the outside office. In another moment the big detective rushed in, holding a slim, frightened young chap in a chauffeur's uniform by the arm. "Here's your man, chief," he cried, triumphantly. "I finally ran him down—last place I went to."

Moon looked at Glennon's prize, who was very pale and nervously wiping the perspiration from his face. "Honest to Gawd, boss," he began, "I didn't know about the murder till most four o'clock. One of me pals showed me the piece in the *Evening Typhoon*. I was scared silly and was thinking about going to the station-house and tellin' the cap what I know when in walks this guy. He'll tell you I owned right up."

"Yes, that's right," answered Glennon. "He's willing to cough up everything."

"All right, then," said Moon, "fire away."

"It was this way, boss," the boy began, eagerly, "a call comes in from this here number and I was sent. I blowed me horn and three men come out. Two of 'em was holdin' up a third. Seemed like he was soused. I tought he'd had too much, and they was takin' him home—see? One of the men tells me to drive up to 187th Street along the boulevard. So, of course, I goes. When we gits to the corner they stops me—see? They gits out and pays me and hands me a V for meself and tells me they don't need me no more—they'll walk the rest of the way. So, I drives back, and s' 'elp me, that's all I know."

"The man who spoke to you—could you see his face?" asked Moon.

"Not very well, boss. It was pretty dark, and he had a cap down over his eyes. But I'd know his voice. He was a German——"

"German! Are you sure?" Moon half-rose from his seat.

"Shure! He scraped his t'roat like all them Dutchies, between a grunt and a snort—see?" replied the chauffeur. "I can swear to that."

Moon sank back smiling triumphantly. "Well, son," he said, in a queer voice, "you're a valuable witness. Now, Pat, have him detained and treat him all right. Don't worry," he added, "it's a matter of form. We've got to hold you as a material witness. But I'll see to it that you don't lose your job and that you're properly paid for your loss of time."

"Pat, come up to the hotel and dine with me," Moon

said, later. "There are a lot of things I want to go over. This has been my busy day, and I'm going to get everything in shape now to fetch the affair to a head. Have you seen to placing the men?"

"Lord, yes," responded Glennon. "There's a house being demolished in the rear and I've got two men up there in the ruins."

"Well, that's all right, then," returned Moon. "By tomorrow night we'll rush 'em. I've got all the loose ends of the skein in my hands now, and I'm going to roll up the ball. I expect Valery at my rooms at ten. He's an old pal of mine and I'm going to give him a beat on the story."

Moon and Glennon conferred after dining, and at nine-thirty the latter bade the Secret Service man good-night. Moon drew his chair up before the fire, and lighting a cigarette sat down to rest and wait for Valery.

Ten o'clock—no Valery! The hands of the clock crept around to eleven. Still the reporter did not appear. "Can it be he has forgotten?" Moon uneasily asked himself. At eleven-thirty he 'phoned the *Typhoon* office. "Valery there?" he casually asked.

"No, sir," came the office boy's reply. "Mr. Valery left the office at eight-thirty and hasn't come back. We've been expectin' him every minute."

Moon hung up the receiver and stood gazing blankly at the wall. A strange, vague uneasiness began to assail his mentality. Where was Valery? Surely not with Miss Grosvenor,—the sorrowing girl—who was to have married Stanton! Valery would have made his call of condolence and come away long ere this.

Suddenly Moon caught the receiver again. He gave a number. A moment more and he heard a gruff voice at the other end of the line:

"Hello!"

"That you, Pat?"

"Yes; what's up?"

"I want you. Get here as quick as you can. Hurry! Don't stop for anything."

CHAPTER SEVEN

BEHIND THE CURTAINED DOORWAY

WHEN Valery struggled back to consciousness he found he was lying on a broad couch. Attempting to rise, he discovered he was bound hand and foot. His head was still aching from the terrific blow he had received, and he was almost dead from thirst. As he stirred and groaned in helpless misery, the door was unlocked and a stockily built man entered the room. Coming over to the couch, he stood regarding the helpless prisoner with a malicious grin. "How you like it—hein?" he asked. "You t'ink you valk der house in ven it please you—ja!"

"Water, water," moaned Valery.

"Vater, hein? Vell, I give you vater," replied his tormentor.

He brought a glass of water and held it to the reporter's lips, who eagerly drained it. The servant took the glass, set it down on a table near by and then, much to Valery's surprise, loosened the cords which tied him. "Now, you shust come mit me," he commanded. Valery, still giddy from the blow he had received, reeled after the man.

He was ushered into a large room on the ground floor at the rear of the house. It was fitted up as a laboratory with all sorts of chemical apparatus. At the desk sat a gray-haired, bloodless-faced man of decided Teutonic appearance. As Valery entered a clock on the mantel struck eleven. A wave of recollection rushed over the reporter—eleven? Why, he was to have met Moon at ten. What would his friend think of his defection? But this passing thought was swiftly banished.

The Prussian regarded him sternly, as he spoke in excellent English. "Now, sir," he said, "I would like you to tell me why you forced your way into my house."

Valery's mental adroitness had been rudely shocked, but a certain instinctive audacity came to his aid. "I did not force my way into your house," he said, calmly. "I rang—your man admitted me and then knocked me senseless. I think I am the one to demand an explanation.

For an instant the Prussian hesitated, a trifle nonplussed at Valery's cool impertinence. Then, "Why did you ring my bell?" he demanded brusquely.

"Is it a crime to ring a bell?" asked Valery.

"That is no answer," snapped the other.

"You haven't answered me as to why your man assaulted me," retorted the reporter. "He bade me enter—said I was expected——"

"He is a fool!" bellowed the Prussian.

"I grant that without the slightest argument," replied Valery. "I made a mistake in the number—that's all. I was looking for a friend who used to live in this street, made a blunder, was invited in and then treacherously banged on the back of the head. I don't call that hospitality."

The reporter was so calm, so self-possessed, that he made a good impression upon the square-headed, pop-eyed man at the desk. The latter fidgeted with some papers before him as he replied: "My man evidently took you for a friend I was expecting and when he saw his error knocked you down. I regret the occurrence and apologize for his stupidity."

Valery's heart leaped. He was going to get out of the mess in pretty good shape after all, he said to himself. "I accept your apology, sir," he replied courteously. "And now, if you please, I will go on my way."

The Prussian had risen from his desk and was actually extending his hand when the servant entered hurriedly and whispered to his master. Valery, keenly watching the two, saw a shade pass over the latter's face. He turned to the reporter and said, stiffly: "Be so kind as to follow my servant, sir."

Valery obeyed, expecting to be ushered out the hall door. Instead, the man led him back up the stairs into the room where he had been imprisoned. "Here, what's the meaning of this?" he demanded. The servant paid no attention, but going out shut and locked the door behind him. Valery stood motionless for a moment, deeply thinking. "What in the devil," he asked himself, "did that fellow say to the old guy that caused him to freeze so suddenly? He was just about to bid me an affable good-night." His eyes wandered about the room. Suddenly he uttered an inarticulate exclamation. His note-book lay on the table. Evidently the servant had taken it from his pocket. He picked it up and was about to restore it to his pocket when he paused. He opened it quickly. His card, with his name as representative of the *Evening Typhoon*, was missing! "He knows!" Valery ejaculated. "I'm up against it now."

Jean Grosvenor looked in startled amazement at the magnificent figure in the doorway. She saw a tall, stal-

wart man in superbly barbaric Oriental robes, literally blazing with jewels. The haughty head was crowned with a turban adorned with an aigrette glittering with rubies. As soon as she had absorbed these sartorial details she looked at the face under the turban. The great, dusky eyes challenged her with a triumphant gleam, the thick red lips parted in a terrible smile. The girl with difficulty repressed a scream. She recognized the man in the box of two evenings before.

He came slowly, like a tiger of the jungle, toward her, his fierce eyes caressing her shrinking figure. "Ah!" he purred, like some huge cat, "is it you, fair, white, lily bud? This is too much happiness. I never dreamed that the caged bird would be she who had so stirred my soul. And how comes it that you visit me so late, lovely child?"

Almost dead from terror, Jean yet managed to pant out: "I did not come to see you—I never dreamed—I made a mistake—"

"It is indeed a fortunate mistake for me," said the Oriental. He was at her side now, looking with cruel satisfaction on the trembling girl. "How I have dreamed—how I have longed for you—and now you are here—alone—under my roof," he emphasized her helplessness.

"I—I—wish to go—at once," stammered the girl. "You must not detain me."

"Must not?" he echoed, his eyes wandering over her beautiful flushed, frightened face. "Must not? Ah, no one says that to me. You come to me—why should I not receive you with joy to my heart?" He put both hands on her shoulders and gazed down at her. "What mistake did you make?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

The girl swallowed, desperately. "I—I—was passing—through the street," she faltered. "I—I—I was looking—for—some one—I knew. I—I—ran up the steps to see the number—of the house. The door was open. I—I foolishly entered. I—I—am sorry. Please let me go." She lifted imploring eyes to her tormentor.

He stared down, as he towered over her, with steady, hypnotic gaze. "Let you—go?" he breathed, passionately. "Never!" and suddenly crushed her against his jeweled breast. But even as he bent to her lips, a knock came on the door.

With an exclamation of annoyance the Oriental released the shuddering girl and strode to the door. Jean heard a whispered consultation. Presently the man turned and said: "Against my will I am obliged to leave you, my fair prisoner, for a little time. But do not think you can escape. Although my servant and I are both going out of the house, you will be well guarded. You will not pass this door"—he indicated the door which led to the passage to the front. And now Jean noticed for the first time that a heavy drapery hung just within the door.

The Oriental passed through the door and drew the curtain across. Suddenly he threw back a fold of the drapery and peered back at her with a sinister smile. *"You—will—not—pass—this—door,"* he repeated. Then he was gone.

Jean heard a sound as if some heavy object were being dragged into the passageway. Then the two men went out of the front room into the upper hall. She heard them descend the stairs—the street door was opened and closed. She realized she was alone in the house.

A dead silence succeeded. The girl stood desperately regarding the curtained doorway. If she could gain the front room through that passage, there might be a chance of summoning help from the window. Why should she not pass that door? *What—what was behind that curtain?*

The idea so grew that it obsessed her. Her only hope lay beyond that curtained doorway. She must make the effort—she must save herself from the terrible fate before her. What could be worse than the Oriental's return? She shivered as she recalled his eyes, his hands, his lips. "I must—I must," she panted resolutely. And then a terror rushed over her—a terror of some vague, unknown peril lurking—hiding—behind that curtain. What could it be—that heavy thing—that was dragged there to block her way to escape? "I must know—I must know," hammered at her agonized brain.

Suddenly she went toward the curtain. Her hand was outstretched. Again that shuddering terror assailed her with overwhelming force. Should she—draw—that curtain?

She stood for a moment as if carved from stone. Then, summing all her fortitude, she seized the drapery and flung it back. A huge cage completely blocked the passage. And from within this cage something—some frightful, writhing thing—wriggled upright and stared at her with venomous, opaque eyes. The girl toppled in a little heap on the floor.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

THE INFERNO

Valery heard steps in the hall and a low rumble of voices. Some one was coming. He looked anxiously toward the door. A key turned in the lock and the door opened cautiously about a foot. He caught a glimpse of the Prussian's livid face and saw behind him a shadow—evidently some person who did not wish to be seen. He heard an exclamation that was not much more than a hissing breath. The door was quickly slammed and locked again. Steps retreated along the hall and down the stairs. A profound silence succeeded. "Now who in the deuce was that peering in at me?" the reporter asked himself. "Have I by chance strayed into a mad house? Certainly every one seems nutty here."

He sat for a few moments listening intently. Suddenly steps again sounded without. The door opened and the Prussian entered, followed by his servant. Without the slightest warning the latter seized Valery and held him in a powerful grip, while his master pressed a handkerchief to the reporter's mouth and nose. Valery struggled gamely against the pungent anesthetic, which he realized was to overpower him, but he was no match for his brawny captors. The room and the two men quickly faded and he soon lay limp in the arms of the Prussian's servant. "Lift him and bring him along," the master ordered. The servant obeyed.

The man laid the unconscious reporter on a couch in the Prussian's library. The Oriental bent and scrutinized Valery closely. "Yes," he said, "it is he. He came here for clues—sent by his paper, no doubt. We are in grave peril."

"What shall we do?" asked the Prussian anxiously.

"Take him to my house," was the instant rejoinder. "I will dispose of him."

The Prussian shrugged his shoulders and spread his

hands abroad. Too much—disposal"—he hesitated over the word—"is bad. We are playing a dangerous game, I fear."

The Oriental looked at him with superb contempt. "We are playing a game which demands no withdrawal, no faltering," he replied. "We cannot stop—we must go on. Fetch him to my car," he ordered the Prussian's servant.

Slowly Jean came to herself. As the hideous reality of the present dawned upon her, she cowered away from the door and, staggering to her feet, hastened to draw the curtain against the terrible barricade. Shuddering and nauseated, she retreated to the barred window, her very hair seeming to rise upon her head. A cold perspiration broke out on the body—she felt she was about to swoon again.

But at this moment—this awful moment when it seemed her soul would leave its frame—she heard the street door unlock and footsteps presently on the stairs. Her tormentor was coming back! And now she heard another sound which froze the blood in her veins—*a shuffling sound, as if a body were being dragged up the stairs.* This sound continued past her door and on into the room in front.

Next, as she listened breathlessly, some one came into the passage and moved the cage she had seen. It was carried out into the hall and down the stairs. And then a stealthy step sounded in the passage. Some one locked the door into the front room. A hand grasped the curtain —he was here!

The poor girl's despairing eyes fell on the dressing-table. There were two cut-glass scent bottles standing there. A hasty idea formulated in her frenzied brain. She caught up one of these bottles and thrust it through the iron bars. With a frantic push she crashed it through the window. "Help! help!" she screamed. Her shrieks were instantly stifled by a powerful hand. Around and around the room the two struggled, over turning chairs and tables. The girl in her extremity fought like a tigress. She struck him in the face with her clenched fists, she tore his turban from his head, she dragged jewels from his robe and flung them at him in her mad struggle. And always he laughed and laughed with insolent triumph at her puny, futile efforts.

Valery was wandering in an interminable inferno. Demons and devils mocked and jeered him, horrid fires flared before him and foul shapes scuttled at his side. But amid all this hellish saturnalia rang a voice—the scream of a frightened, tormented woman. "Where are you?" he kept calling, but she did not answer save with shrieks.

Suddenly he burst from his dazed lethargy. The screams —the screams—why! They were here—here—close at hand—there—there!—beyond that door—a woman in dire need—in dreadful peril!

With one bound he was at the door. It was locked! But Valery seemed suddenly to be given the strength of twenty giants. He put his shoulder against the door and burst it in. He plunged along the passage, tearing down a curtain, as he hurled himself into the room.

He saw a woman—her long fair hair unbound, her clothing almost torn from her shoulders—struggling, fighting in the embrace of a mocking, jeering devil in a gem-encrusted robe. This demon turned his face toward Valery as he leaped toward him. "Ramba Chanterba!" the reporter gasped. "Let that girl alone!"

One wild cry, "Bob—oh, Bob," and he tore the girl from the grasp of the Hindu.

"Jean—Jean—my God! Oh, my God!" he shouted. "What—what are you doing here?"

Panting, sobbing, clinging to him, Jean gasped out her story. Meantime, the Hindu, adjusting his disordered robes, stood smiling like an evil spirit. "So," he jeered, "it was all arranged between you—yes? You were both to spy upon me."

"You cursed swine!" roared Valery, "hold your tongue. You dare touch this young lady again and I'll tear you limb from limb," holding the quivering girl close to his heart, trying to soothe her agitation.

"Oh—the brave Valery!" taunted Ramba Chanterba. "He ees the lady's knight; he comes to save her." He strode to them and snapped his jeweled fingers in the reporter's face. "Why, you—you," he sneered, "you cannot even save yourself—poor, puny, miserable scribe!" He got no further, for gently putting Jean one side Valery suddenly, with great neatness and despatch, shot a blow which sent the Hindu sprawling on the floor. "You'll find out whether I can do something besides write," he observed. "You damnable beast!"

Slowly the Oriental clambered to his feet. For a moment he stood swaying. "Oh, a bit groggy, are you, you whelp?" observed Valery, who was growing more enraged every minute. It was the old story of the patient, plodding, unemotional man suddenly aroused, reverting to primeval instincts and seeing red. "I ought to kill you, and I'm not sure that I won't," he added.

But Ramba Chanterba gazed at the two with the face of Lucifer himself. "So—you will kill me?" he snarled. "We shall see." He strode haughtily past them, through the passage to the other room. They heard him go out into the hall and down the stairs.

Valery was holding Jean in his arms. She was softly weeping on his breast. "There—there—dearest girl," he patted her shoulder and laid his rough cheek against her soft face, "compose yourself, my brave friend. You put up a good stiff fight, Jean. I'l get you out of here some way."

"Oh, Bob—Bob," sobbed the girl, "he is a fiend! He will kill us. Listen—I must tell you——"

But she got no further. They heard someone unlock the door of the front room and come through the passage. A moment later, a Hindu servant entered and salaamed profoundly before them. "Me—Juggernaut," he stated. "My sahib say—you sahib and mem sahib leave house. Come," he indicated the way and backed before them into the front room.

As in a dream they followed him through the passage, the front room, the hall, down the stairs to the lower hall. Valery led Jean toward the street door, but Juggernaut stepped before them. "No," he said, "down stairs—out back entrance—my sahib say. Near morning—people see you go out."

He led them down to the basement. Here they expected to be let out the area door, but Juggernaut again motioned them to follow him into the cellar. Jean drew back in fresh terror. "Oh, Bob," she whispered. "I'm afraid—I don't dare go down there!"

"No fear," smiled Juggernaut, "secret entrance. Come."

"It's our only chance, dear girl," encouraged Valery.

Now, they were in the cellar. Juggernaut led them to

a door. "Go in there," he muttered. "Door there. Push open. Go in alley. Get out."

The Hindu gently hustled them through the door into a small room, partitioned off from the rest of the cellar. There was an open iron-barred window through which the first faint gray of the dawn was creeping.

Ramba Chanterba stood there, smiling malignantly at them. "Welcome," he said. "I hope you will enjoy your escape even as your friend Stanton did!" Before either of the startled pair could speak he and his servant were gone. The door clanged dismally and a bolt shot heavily behind them.

CHAPTER NINE

WHAT CAME THROUGH THE WINDOW

MOON and Glennon had worked like mad for hours perfecting details, phoning and arranging everything so that there should not be the slightest hitch at the climax.

"Pat," Moon had said, "I'm going up to see this Miss Grosvenor. From her I can find out the exact hour Valery left her place. You go ahead, while I'm gone, on the lines we've laid out. Let me see," consulting his watch. "It's a quarter of one. Half an hour up there and half an hour back. I should be here by two at the latest. Then we'll move."

Moon sprang from the taxi and hastily ran up the steps to the vestibule of the house. It was not a modern building with an all-night service, but an old-fashioned house made over into small apartments. Striking a match, he looked for Jean Grosvenor's name, found it and rang. No answering click of the door rewarded him. Again he rang long and insistently. Still no reply.

He rang the janitor's bell again and again and then shook the door in his impatience. At last a sleepy-eyed man appeared growling imprecations. "What the dev——" he began.

"Cut that," sternly ordered Moon, showing his badge. "It's a matter of life and death that I see Miss Grosvenor. I've rung repeatedly. Go up with me and see if we can rouse her."

The two men rang and beat upon the door to Jean's apartment, but evoked no response. Moon turned a desperate face on the janitor. "Possibly something's wrong in there," he said, with a queer little note in his voice, "can't you go up the fire-escape and see?"

The janitor unlocked the door and peered out at Moon with a frightened look. "She ain't here," he said, as Moon pushed his way in. "Come in here." He led Moon into Jean's little bedroom. "See," he said, "she left the light—she must be coming back."

Moon glanced hastily around. "Yes," he said, "and see here!" He caught up a frilled nightgown lying on the opened bed, "here is her nightrobe—and she threw back the covers so that her bed would be ready when she came in." He reflected a moment. "Are you married?" he demanded of the amazed janitor.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Get your wife up here quick."

In a few moments a frowsy-haired, disheveled and alarmed woman in a turkey-red kimona stood blinking at Moon. "You know about Miss Grosvenor's frocks?" he asked sharply.

"Well, yes; I seen a good many of them," was the hesitating answer.

"Look quickly through the closet and see what is missing. If an evening gown is gone, she is liable to be back later, though she would hardly go to a ball or opera when her fiancé is dead," he added.

The woman went carefully through the wardrobe. "No," she said, "here is her evening gown. I seen her when she was dolled up to go out with her steady—the rich man who was killed. And her swell tailor suit is here. She's wore out a dark blue serge skirt she puts on mornings and her thick day coat—and—and—her sport hat is gone. She must 'a' intended to go only a little way."

"Exactly," said Moon. "She went out for a little stroll, and it's now after one and she hasn't come in. Something has happened. I must get back downtown as quick as I can.' He rushed from the room, plunged down the stairs and leaped into the taxi. "Drive like hell!" he ordered the chauffeur.

He burst into his room at the hotel, where Glennon and two other aids sat waiting his return. "Boys," he said, succinctly, "we've got to get busy. The girl's gone, too!"

"Well, I'll be——" commenced Glennon. But Moon broke in. "Yes," he said tersely, "and I fear the worst. She must have gone with Valery and both have been trapped by this devil. Pat, when we get there, take Fuller and Rooney and go to the front of the house and send Bell and Connolly around to the rear to report. They may have news." He went to a drawer in his dresser and took out a revolver. "Going to take your noiseless?" asked Glennon.

"Yes," Moon responded, "it may come in handy. We don't know what we'll be up against. Come on."

Carefully treading their way through a dark alley and picking their steps among the rubbish and debris of the demolished building, Moon and his aids stole to the rear of the house. From those ruins one form after another rose quietly, drawing stealthily closer. Anything new?" Moon whispered to one of his men.

"A light went up a little while ago in the second story back," was the muttered response. "Nothing else."

"He is in the house, then?" Moon said, crouching down behind a ragged wall.

Two men presently joined them. "About three hours ago," reported Bell, "a woman went in the house—"

"A woman? Alone?" Moon's voice was sharp and tense.

"Yes, and she hasn't come out. His car came up and he and his servant drove away. Connolly had his taxi on the corner and followed him."

'They went to the other house," Connolly broke in, "and

in about half an hour came out with a man whom they put in the car and drove back. They lifted him out of the car and carried him in the house."

Moon's brain was working overtime. Why had the woman come ahead of the man? If Jean Grosvenor and Valery had gone from the girl's home together, why had Valery gone to the other house? As he was busily revolving the problem in his alert brain, a terrific crash of glass was heard. Some object hurtled through the air and fell almost at Moon's feet. At the same time he heard a muffled scream.

"Close in, boys," Moon peremptorily ordered. "Connolly, you go back and join Glennon. We may have to rush the street door. I'll stop here for the present. I want to see what's doing at the rear."

Presently a dim light gleamed in the cellar. Moon lay flat on his stomach, and wriggling over nearer the house lay where he could command a view of the cellar. For some time he sprawled on the ground absolutely motionless.

And now the first faint, gray streaks of dawn began to creep through the ruins of the old, torn-down dwelling. The men back of Moon saw him glide swiftly to a barred cellar window—saw him put his hand steadily to his hip pocket.

As the heavy door banged behind Ramba Chanterba and his treacherous servant, the two prisoners stared at each other in consternation. "Why"—stammered Jean—"why—Bob—what—has he—shut us in—here for? To starve us to death? And—and—what did he mean—by saying that—about—about—Jim?"

"God only knows, Jean," returned Valery. "He is our only hope now. That fiend has fetched us here to our doom. Oh, Jean, Jean, why did I not strangle him with my bare hands? Why did I trust that vile devil of a servant?"

Suddenly Jean's body swayed limply against his. She clutched his arm in a frenzy. "Look—look!" she panted, "in that dark corner. What is that? Oh, my God, Bob—look—there is something—moving!" Her voice rose in a shriek.

Valery peered into the gloom and the marrow in his bones chilled. "The cage—the cage," gasped Jean, "the thing—inside—look—it is moving—it is coming out—the door—the door is open! Oh, Bob, we are lost."

Valery caught the girl in his arms. Together they reeled back against the wall as far as possible from the frightful reptile crawling from the opened door of the cage. It crept forward and suddenly rose upright, its hooded head swaying to and fro, its wicked, opaque eyes fixed in an immovable, venomous stare upon the two unfortunates cowering before it.

"It's a cobra," muttered Valery. "It will strike us! Oh, Jean, my girl, forgive me. It will soon be over. You will soon be with poor Stanton—your love—killed in that same awful way."

"Yes, Bob," murmured the girl, closing her eyes to shut out the appalling sight, "we've got to go. But hold me close, Bob—dearest—for now—now—that we are about to die—I can tell you—it was not Stanton—ever. It was you—you—all the while." With a dry sob Valery crushed her closer to his heart.

"Jean," he muttered after a moment. "We can't die now. I'm going to make one effort. I'm going to grab it around the neck."

"Don't be a damned fool, Bob," said a low voice at the iron-barred window. Don't move—don't stir an eyelash—don't breathe! That's your only salvation."

There was a sudden faint, muffled hiss—the cobra lay writhing on the floor! With eyes starting from their heads the lovers watched the death struggle of the reptile at their feet. Once more the noiseless revolver spat—the serpent lay still.

"Keep perfectly quiet," said the voice. "Don't make any noise to put them on guard! I'll have you out of there in five minutes."

Valery stood staring like one demented, holding the unconscious girl in his arms. "Oh, God, oh God, oh God!" over and over he babbled, incoherently.

CHAPTER TEN

A LONG LANE

FOR weeks Jean Grosvenor hovered between life and death, shrieking and moaning in dire delirium. But at last the crisis was safely passed and the days of convalescence came, when, a pale wraith of her former self, she was permitted to see Valery—Valery, for whom she had repeatedly begged.

She sat in her tiny reception room now before the open fire, wrapped in a warm dressing-gown, the trained nurse hovering and brooding over her, fluffing up her golden hair under the dainty cap, pinching her cheeks to get a little color in them. "I don't want your sweetheart to see you looking like a ghost," she laughed.

Jean regarded herself in the hand mirror. "I am a fright," she murmured, "how hollow my cheeks are, and how sunken my eyes."

"Well, what can you expect?" asked her nurse. "We've had hard work to draw you back from the border-land. But now you will gain rapidly and soon have your beauty back. By the way," she added, with an assumption of carelessness, "Mr. Valery is not looking so very well, either. Small wonder! He's been so worried and anxious about you. I never saw such devotion. Never a day, however occupied he has been, that he has not rung the bell to ask for you. Ah! There is his ringing now." She hastened to the door to admit the visitor.

Jean looked up, her heart in her eyes—looked—then stared again—at the man hurrying toward her. Who was this? Not Bob Valery, strong, athletic, with whim-

sical laughter, loving eyes, but a shadow of a man with deep-lined face and cavernous eyes. As he flung himself on his knees at the side of her chair and buried his head in her lap she looked down on the thick shock of hair that had been chestnut brown but was now as white as snow!

"Jean—Jean," he muttered. "I am afraid to look at you."

"Bob," she whispered, "is it indeed you? What—what has happened to you?"

He lifted his head and stared at her with moistening eyes: "Jean," he said, "God knows I was ugly enough before. But now look at me; see what—a—a—nightmare I am; don't shrink from me—don't loathe me."

"Bob," her slender arms were around him, holding him fast, "I could never do that—you know. But—what is it?"

"It's been so—ever since that night," he replied. "When Moon and his men broke in the door they found me—like this." He touched his white hair, and stammered disjointedly. "Indeed, it was hours before I could tell a detailed, consecutive story."

"Oh, my poor dear!" impulsively cried the girl, as she bent and laid her pale cheek against his, "and when you could speak, did you tell them all? Did you tell them how you saved me? How you were ready to imperil your life? No—no—of course you didn't; you are not that sort. Bob, dearest, I love you—I love you more than ever—white hair, deep lines, sunken eyes and all. It was never the external I loved—it was you—you yourself—the real ego—the man who dared everything for me."

"Oh, my girl, my girl," and then there was silence in their heaven for the space of two or three blissful minutes.

"You are not so much yourself to look at, Jean!" Valery said, with a touch of his old lightsome manner. "You darling—how fearfully you have suffered. But you can get back your lost beauty. I can't—there's all the difference."

"Never mind!" she soothed, "you are very distinguished with your gray hair."

"I was thinking of dyeing it," he began, unblushingly. "I read that sage tea is very good."

"Don't you dare," she whispered, smoothing the rough mass back from his forehead. "I want it just as it is—I am proud of it. It's a symbol of my knight's heroism—my palladin's courage in combatting the dragon single-handed."

For an hour the happy couple engaged in the idle, joyful, divinely foolish badinage of lovers. At length Valery took himself away, promising to return the next evening and bring Moon with him. "Moon has much to tell you," he said. "For one thing, he is anxious to apologize for breaking into your apartment during your absence and looking over your wardrobe."

The following evening Valery brought Moon to call on Jean. "Miss Grosvenor," said the Secret Service man, as he took her frail hand in his big paw, "you must overlook my lack of ceremony in pushing my way into your home that night."

"Why, Mr. Moon," the girl laughed, "what have I to pardon? Where would Bob and I be now had you not played the house-breaking act?" She gave a little shudder as she finished. Before her rose the dismal, underground room. She saw again the faint gray of the dawn, the frightful death writhing toward her lover and herself. She heard once more the soft hiss of Moon's revolver. "We owe you our lives," she breathed, her great brown eyes fixed appealingly on Moon's granite-like face. "We must always be friends."

"And now," she continued, indicating a chair near her, "sit here, Mr. Moon, and tell me everything. I have been counting the hours till you should come with your story. Begin, please, at the very beginning."

There was no resisting Jean when she put forth her own peculiar magnetic appeal. Moon smiled at her eagerness and, as he rolled a cigarette, said slowly: "The very beginning, Miss Grosvenor! That was months ago, when the Department of Justice assigned me the task of discovering the master mind which was directing a plot of great magnitude with ramifications in many large cities. From Seattle and San Francisco, across the continent to Chicago and St. Louis, then to New York spread, like the tentacles of the devil-fish, a conspiracy in our then neutral country against a friendly power. It was a vast scheme to ship munitions through China and Japan into India wherewith to arm the natives in an insurrection against Great Britain. While it was known in Washington that the source of this conspiracy was Prussian, it was absolutely necessary to find the spider who was spinning this gigantic web. My orders were to find and get him as soon as possible.

"I came to New York," went on Moon, lighting his cigarette, "and visited every quarter of the town where Orientals congregate, because from the first I suspected the Eastern mind. I was convinced that the cunning, the treachery and duplicity of the East were back of this plot. But all the Hindus I ran up against seemed harmless, inoffensive enough creatures—by the way, Bob, you would be surprised if you knew how many of these chaps there are in New York. However, I did not despair, although I fully realized that I had started on a long road. It was quite like looking for the proverbial needle in the hay, you know. One day a sudden idea struck me like an electric shock. There were Hindu students at Columbia College, I had learned. Something might be picked up in that locality."

"I went up and engaged a small apartment very near the college, and thereafter whenever I took my walks abroad I usually sat down near the library and studied the types that passed me. Day after day went by and no developments. At last one morning I saw an extraordinary figure descend the steps of the library—a figure so striking, so haughty, so arrogant—that it at once enchained my attention. It came nearer, passed me with the lithe, padding step of some wild thing of the jungle. I rose and sauntered after the man. That was my first glimpse of Ramba Chanterba. From that moment he was shadowed.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE TIGER HUNT

"WE very soon discovered," went on Moon, after a silence of a few moments, "many interesting things about the Columbia student. Among others, we found that he maintained two houses in different streets on the west side of the town. In one of these houses lived a bullet-headed, pop-eyed man of decidedly Teutonic appearance—Oswald Zolverein was the name he gave. Messages were eternally passing between these houses, the go-between being the Hindu servant, Juggernaut, or Zolverein's man Otto. Having established this intimate association to our satisfaction, we were reasonably sure we were on the right track. Personally, I trailed the Hindu. I was in the theater, Miss Grosvenor, the night poor Stanton gave his last box-party. From my seat under the gallery I saw Ramba Chanterba's undisguised and brazen admiration of your beauty. I saw also your palpable vexation. I was close behind him when he edged his way through the foyer to your side. I saw you start and cling to Stanton's arm as if alarmed at the Hindu's audacity.

"The manager of the house was standing near the door as your party went out. I whispered to him asking if he knew who you were. He gave your name, adding the fact that you were the well-known writer to whom Stanton was devoted.

"That afternoon I had followed Chanterba to the St. Titus, where I ran into Bob, who later introduced me to Stanton and the Hindu. I have often thought of that meeting. How remarkable that in that group idly chatting stood a murderer, his victim and the avengers. Bob, do you remember my asking you not to tell the Oriental that Stanton was the well-known munitions manufacturer? Chanterba suspected him. I didn't want him to know positively. He was cunningly trying to find out. Zolverein had described him to the Hindu.

"The night that Stanton went to Chanterba's house my men were busy elsewhere. That was where we slipped a cog. No one saw Stanton enter the thirteenth door, and only the chauffeur saw him emerge, as he supposed, intoxicated and unable to find his way alone. We, of course, put both Hindus through the third degree raised to the tenth torment, after we got them and they finally came across. It seems they were expecting Zolverein for a midnight conference. He had sent Otto early in the evening to tell Ramba Chanterba that he would be quite late in coming. When Stanton boldly rang the bell, Juggernaut, believing it was their fellow conspirator, opened the door wide. Stanton marched in just as you did, Bob. The servant laid Stanton out exactly as he did you. They could not imagine what had brought him there. Chanterba recognized him as the man he had met the day before at the St. Titus. He thought him a spy, possibly a detective. When Zolverein arrived a few minutes later he positively identified him as the munitions manufacturer.

"Ramba Chanterba's unholy joy knew no bounds. Furious at Stanton, who had absolutely refused to sell munitions to Zolverein when he called on the manufacturer in his Bridgeton office, and still believing he had come there to spy upon them, Chanterba delivered him, still unconscious, to the cobra."

Moon was interrupted by a frenzied sob from Jean. "Miss Grosvenor," he said gently, "don't give way. It was better that way. The poor chap never realized his awful doom. He did not have to see the thing crawling towards him. That was spared him.

"They took him to the vacant lot and jammed his face against the stones until it was beaten to a jelly, expecting thus to prevent identification. Had it not been for the peculiar ornament on his watch fob they might have succeeded in their design, although the disappearance of so prominent a man very likely would have been associated with the finding of this body.

"When I saw the marks on Stanton's wrist which the physicians, in their cursory examination, overlooked, it struck me at once that they might have been made by some reptile. One naturally associates the cobra with East Indians. I went at once to a reptile fancier and importer down by the water front. When I entered the horrible shop the proprietor, a greasy, sallow Portuguese, came grinning to meet me. I represented myself to be the manager of a circus—said I was looking for material for my snake charmer. He showed me his pets. I looked at anacondas and pythons and rattlers until I was sick. Then I said, carelessly: "I think if I could get a cobra it would make a more thrilling act.

"'Me—I 'ave no cobra,' he replied. 'I 'ad a beauty, a superbe! but I sell 'im.'

"'Too bad!' I said. 'Do you mind telling me to whom? Possibly I might buy from him.'

"'Eet was a black man,' the Portuguese answered, 'ver' dark—from India, he say. Wait, I geeve you ze name.'

"He went to his dirty desk, and opening a drawer drew out a bit of paper, scanned it sharply, and then fetched it to me. 'There ze name,' he said, triumphantly.

"It was as I had expected. Ramba Chanterba had been clever enough to give his servant's name, but the address of his house was there on the paper. 'Ah, yes; thank you,' I said. 'You don't want this any longer?'

"'No—no,' cried the man. 'You can 'ave heem—hees no use to me.'

"I went out from the loathsome, crawly joint, knowing that I held Chanterba in the hollow of my hand, not only as a plotter against the government of the United States but also as the murderer of Stanton.

"You can imagine my horror when not finding Bob, it was suddenly impressed upon me that he, in his Quixotic zeal to discover the murderer, had actually gone to that house and perhaps met Stanton's fate. Hence my search for you, Miss Grosvenor, to see if Bob had given you any inkling where he was going after he left you.

"But when I discovered that you, too, were missing, my alarm was intensified. I recalled the fashion in which Chanterba had watched you like a hawk. I had discovered some of his methods with women, and I feared he might have abducted you. Good Lord! How we worked to close in on that house that night! We did not dare wait longer. When I looked through that iron-barred window and saw——" But here Moon, the iron-nerved, paused abruptly. A deadly nausea seized him—he shook from head to foot. "God!" he muttered. "I dream of it now nights—I wake

in a cold, clammy sweat." He wiped the perspiration from his face with a trembling hand. "There was just one chance—I took it!"

Moon was gone. The lovers sat before the fire, gazing in the bed of glowing coals, painting their rosy pictures and dreaming their happy dreams. Valery's gray head rested against Jean's blonde curls. Hand in hand, cheek to cheek, they waited the return of Jean's nurse from her evening out.

The room was very still. The clock ticked loudly on the mantel where Stanton's picture stood gazing down at them with frank, kindly eyes. A silence, profound, impressive—a silence as of vast spaces, of eternal mysteries—enveloped and enfolded them. Suddenly Jean spoke, in a low, awestruck tone. "Bob, dearest," she whispered, "how did we happen to go to that house? *Who sent us there? Was it Jim?*"

"Only God in His wisdom knows, darling," Valery quietly rejoined. And who knows? Perhaps behind them brooded a loving shade, directing, protecting, blessing them—his loyal, valiant friends—they who had not forgotten him.

A startling detective story will be issued in our next number, entitled "A Sanctimonious Villain." Do not fail to read it.

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your semi-monthly copy of "MYSTERY MAGAZINE." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this magazine every two weeks, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

HIGH HEELS A DETRIMENT

WE have heard much complaint from the experts in hygiene against the high heels affected by womankind. But now the heels of the unplumaged male sex come in for their share of condemnation. Even the moderate elevation common to heels of men's shoes is bad for health and happiness, according to the Journal of the *American Medical Association*, which quotes an article by Dr. Fairweather in the *British Medical Journal*.

In a normal barefooted man the balance of the body is so perfect that practically no effort is required to keep erect. The weight rests on the heels and outer sides of the feet, not on the arch or inner sides of the feet. Fairweather says that if the heels are raised from the ground by boot heels even a quarter of an inch thicker than the soles the outer side of the foot is removed from the ground and the weight falls on the arch. The center of gravity is also thrown forward, and in a man of 5 feet 7 inches the head is thrown 9 inches off the vertical by a heel three-quarters inch high. To remedy this, and to prevent falling forward, the back muscles and the extensors of thigh and foot come into action. A soldier 5 feet 7 inches, weighing 154 pounds, and wearing a heel three-quarters inch thicker than the sole, has to exert strength enough to be constantly lifting 56 pounds from the ground in trying to retain his balance. In a man loaded with 60 pounds equipment this means that he has to support 116 pounds, nearly doubling the weight he is supposed to carry.

Fairweather is convinced that this is doubtless one factor in the causation of soldier's heart, as every heart, even if healthy, is not equal to this strain. To preserve the lumbar curve without overtaxing the back muscles women are obliged to use corsets. The use of waist belts by men is similarly explained. The waste of neuromuscular energy in retaining an erect posture when wearing heels is very great and must play a large part in producing hysteria, neurasthenia, and possibly refraction troubles.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, By Redfield Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon.
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, By Pauline Carrington Bouve
27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28 THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler

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FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 168 West 23d St., New York.

THAT ENGAGEMENT-RING TRICK

By C. T. JORDAN

I

"I'M Daniel the Great," the man in the gray overcoat introduced himself. "Playing the Parker this week and next with my mammoth illusion show."

"Yes?" queried the spectacled proprietor of Dalton's Jewelry Emporium. "Glad to know you, Mr. Daniel. What can I do for you?" He smiled ingratiatingly at the magician, and rubbed his palms together satisfiedly.

"I have been looking about for something to enhance the attraction of my entertainment," the wizard explained, "and I believe I have hit on a good idea. During the course of my performance I do a wonderful trick with a borrowed engagement-ring. After apparently being demolished and subjected to all sorts of misuse, the ring is restored magically and returned to its owner."

"Hm," commented the squint-eyed little jeweler. "A borrowed engagement-ring, eh?" His eyes glinted interestedly. "That's rather in my line. And you——" he paused for the other to go on.

"I think it would take well with my audiences if I worked up the finish a little more elaborately. When restoring the ring, I should like to have it enclosed in a neat little plush-lined box or case."

"I see. I see. And you would of course present the box to the ring's owner with your compliments. Aha! You would like to see some cases?"

"Precisely. I want something very neat in appearance. Something in leather would do nicely, I believe."

Dalton, the jeweler, scratched his ear with a stubby forefinger.

"I have something here that's very nice," he said in a moment, reaching behind him and pulling out a drawer. "How does this strike you?"

"Just the thing!" enthused Daniel, lifting the clasp and pulling open the hinged lid. "Small and neat. This'll do finely. What do you ask for this style?"

The jeweler appraised his caller craftily, hesitated, then named a figure that was not at all low. Dalton wasn't in business for the fun of it.

"I should want a gross," the magician said slowly. "Couldn't you knock off a little on a quantity lot?"

"A gross!" beamed the crooked-backed jeweler. "That's something different entirely. Yes. I can let you have them at ten per cent. less. But I haven't more than three or four on hand. However, I have facilities for making them here, and could let you have them in a few days. Would that be satisfactory?"

"Let's see," mused Daniel the Great. "To-day's Monday. No matinées till the end of the week. Four would last me through Thursday night. Could you have them ready by then—or Friday noon at the latest?" He pocketed the four cases the jeweler had produced.

"Assuredly," the proprietor assented readily. "We'll make it Friday noon, if it's all the same to you."

"That'll do. And I suppose you want a deposit?"

Dalton shrugged his shriveled shoulders. "Suit yourself," he said—a rather odd statement for him.

The magician peeled two greenbacks from a satisfied-looking roll and handed them across the showcase. An avaricious look came over Dalton's face at sight of the money. A receipt in his pocket, Daniel made his way from the shop. How was he, a traveling magician, to know that the squinting, stooped little jeweler did not enjoy the best of reputations among others of his profession in Oakland?

II.

Clark Wade rose from his bed that Friday morning with a feeling of freshness and buoyancy. This was the day, he had decided the night before, that he was going to ask Cora the fateful question. He had known her nearly a year now. They were both members of Daniel the Great's company, and from the moment Cora Floyd had joined Clark had taken a fancy to her.

She, as the months passed, became fond of him, and he had little doubt as to the nature of her answer when he should pop the question.

Young Wade was twenty-two—a tow-headed, bright-faced chap—and drew twenty-five dollars a week and traveling expenses as assistant to the necromancer. It was he who, out of the audience's sight, was directly responsible for the success of many of the conjurer's baffling feats of magic. Not being careless with his money, he had managed to put aside a neat little sum this season.

"To-day decides it for me," he said lightly to himself. "But before I do anything else I've got to scout around for a ring."

Which explains why ten o'clock that morning found him loitering before the show-window of a Broadway jeweler. A large tray of diamond engagement-rings held his gaze. There were stones of all sizes, but one ring in particular interested him. He strained his eyes to try and read the miniature price tag attached, but had to give it up.

"If it doesn't come to over a century it's none too good for Cora," he acknowledged. Then his eyes encountered the name on the window. He found that he was gazing upon the display of Dalton's Jewelry Emporium.

He felt in his pocket to make sure he still had the five double eagles he had removed from the bottom of his trunk, hesitated a moment, then strode into the shop.

Each side of the shop was lined with glass showcases, and behind that on his left were a man and a woman, a blonde, with big eyes, fleshy arms, huge shoulders—in all a very large woman. The man, a stooped, squint-eyed individual, was talking earnestly with her, but the moment they became aware of Clark's entrance their conversation suddenly ceased, and the stout lady withdrew to a back office.

Dalton, his face wreathed in smiles, advanced, rubbing his palms contentedly, to meet the possible customer.

"Good-morning," he greeted the magician's assistant amiably. "What can I do for you to-day, sir?"

"I'd like to see some rings," the young man replied, adding, a little bashfully, "engagement-rings, please."

"Any special style?" queried the jeweler. "And—eh—how high do you care to go?"

"I saw one in the window I liked," answered Wade, "if the price isn't too steep," he qualified.

Dalton went to the window and removed the tray. "Which one was it?" he asked, as he set the tray on a nearby showcase.

"This one." Clark lifted the ring and twisted it about in his fingers. "It's a beaut!" he commented admiringly.

The jeweler took it from him and squinted at the tag. "It's ninety-seven fifty," he announced.

"I'll take it," immediately stated the young man.

The jeweler boxed it in a cheap cardboard affair, and Clark, pocketing his change and the ring, walked out.

At two o'clock that afternoon, Daniel the Great knocked on Wade's door—he roomed for the Oakland stay at the Alpine House.

"Come in," the young man called, and the magician entered.

"I want you to do an errand for me, if you will, Clark," were the wizard's first words. He took a chair and drew out his pocketbook. He passed a greenback of large denomination to his assistant and explained:

"I ordered some ring cases from a jeweler, and he agreed to deliver them by noon to-day. But he hasn't shown up yet. Do you mind going after them?"

"Sure, I'll go," replied Wade at once. "Where is it, and how many am I to get?" He reached for his hat.

"A hundred and forty are due me, and if they are all ready that bill will just settle the score. Bring them to the theater. I'll be there. The place is on Broadway—I don't know whether you have noticed it or not. It's Dalton's Jewelry Emporium."

"Oh, yes, I know where that is," stated Wade, his cheeks reddening. "I'll be off right away. So-long."

When Clark Wade again entered the jeweler's shop on Broadway he found the proprietor conversing with the stout woman for the second time. But what surprised him more than the hasty retreat she beat to the rear office was the sentence he heard her speak before his entrance was observed.

"It's risky business, Dalton, to monkey with a magician."

"What! You back again!" exclaimed the jeweler as Wade approached. "Nothing the matter with the ring, was there?"

"No," replied Daniel's assistant, somewhat puzzled at the conversation he had overheard. "I'm here for my boss, this time. He wants those ring cases he ordered of you."

"You mean Daniel the Great?" questioned the jeweler, a look of displeasure crossing his face as he cast an uneasy glance toward the back office.

"Yes," said Clark, wondering at the other's manner.

"I was just going to send them over," said Dalton, regaining control of himself. "We were a little late getting them finished. Just one moment and I'll fetch them." He hurried to the rear room, and did not return for several minutes. When he did appear, Clark saw that he carried a neat parcel wrapped in brown paper.

"There are a hundred and forty here," announced Dalton, tapping the package with his disengaged hand. "Full count."

Clark Wade did not like the shiftiness of the other's eyes, but he paid the bill, pocketed a receipt, and picking up the package, set out for the Parker Theater, on Twelfth street.

Daniel the Great opened the package when Wade arrived, and expressed his satisfaction at the workmanship of the job.

Young Wade, seeing so many of the neat little boxes, and recalling his decision of last night, spoke to his employer.

"What'll you charge me for one of these?" he asked.

"A ring case? What on earth do you want of one, Clark? But if you can really make use of one, you are more than welcome to it."

Wade took from his pocket the cardboard box containing the ring he had purchased that morning, and to the magician's bewilderment transferred its contents to one of the leather-covered cases.

"What the mischief!" ejaculated the astonished Daniel.

But the flush that spread over Clark Wade's cheeks was the only satisfaction he got.

III.

A well-filled house greeted Daniel's Friday evening performance at the Parker. Applause greeted his every feat, and as he neared the conclusion of part two of his entertainment, interest was at fever heat. The man had personality, and a way with audiences that never failed to win them over, once he had their attention.

"For my next experiment," explained the conjurer, as he started down the runway, "it will be necessary for me to borrow a diamond engagement-ring. What young lady will oblige me? Hold up your hands, please."

He was sauntering up the center aisle, now. The occupant of the aisle seat of row seven on his left clutched his sleeve as he was passing on. "You may borrow mine," a feminine voice said.

He turned, and noted that the person who spoke was a very stout lady, and not at all young. Nevertheless she held in her hand a gold ring with a monster diamond setting. He thanked her and accepted it on the end of his wand.

As he wheeled to return to the stage, he transferred the wand to his other hand, leaving exposed on the end which had been concealed in his right hand a ring which, if it were not as expensive as the one he had just borrowed, at least could boast of as large a stone. But the stone was paste. Considering what he intended doing with it, it would have been altogether too expensive a proposition to use a real diamond ring.

Arrived on the stage, he allowed the substitute ring to slide from his wand to a china plate held by an assistant—Clark Wade. Unobserved by the spectators, he allowed the genuine borrowed ring to slide down the wand, an instant later, and into the attendant's coat pocket.

Leaving Daniel to mangle and make in many ways unrecognizable what the audience imagined to be the borrowed ring, we will follow young Wade. No sooner had the conjurer relieved him of the china plate, than he made his exit, going directly to a table behind the scenes. He took the real ring from his pocket and placed it inside one of the little leather cases. The case closed, he inserted it in a small wooden box, just large enough to contain it. This box he stood on a particular spot of the table's top, then pressed it down with his hands. A mechanism concealed in the table allowed the box to sink down till its top lay just flush with that of the table, whereupon the table looked no different than before. The box seemed a component part of its top.

He next brought the table between the wings—it was a slender and unsuspicious-looking little stand—where he awaited Daniel's cue for his entry.

As soon as he had walked in with the table, he told himself, he would have fifteen minutes of leisure, and in that period—well, he'd manage to get Cora alone in a corner.

The borrowed ring having to all outward appearance gone through a strenuous five minutes, and being now in pitiable shape, the conjurer suddenly seized a pistol,

and with a hammer forced the ring into its muzzle. He pointed to a foot-square box of wood, which had hung by a cord throughout his performance from the ceiling of the auditorium. He aimed his pistol carefully at it and fired.

Throwing the pistol aside he lowered the box by its cord—and at this moment Clark Wade entered with the little table, which he stood just back of the footlights, immediately departing for the long-looked-forward-to and momentous chat with Miss Cora Floyd.

"How fortunate that a table should be so handy!" exclaimed the magician. "Just what I need." He placed the box on it.

Taking from his pocket a small key, he unlocked the box, and lifted out from it another box, slightly smaller. The outer box he placed on the floor. The second box unlocked, a third was forthcoming, and from it a fourth. When he unlocked the fourth box and set it on the floor he was quite careful to place the box it had contained on the tricky spot of the table top.

Unobserved by the audience, his toe pressed a pedal at the base of the rear table leg, and this levered the box young Wade had adjusted right up into the interior of the fifth box, which, unsuspected by the audience, had no bottom.

Immediately unlocking the visible box, Daniel lifted out the sixth and advanced with it to the runway, where he unlocked it. He walked down into the auditorium, and allowed the stout, blonde lady he had borrowed the ring of to herself remove the little leather case.

"Unclasp it, madam," he smiled, "and you will find your ring wholly restored. I thank you," and he bowed his appreciation of the applause which was showered on him.

"Accept the little container with my compliments," the wizard added.

She thanked him bewilderingly, and unclasped the little fastener. She raised the tiny leather lid.

Daniel had just turned to go back to the stage when her exclamation halted him.

"What does this mean, sir?" she demanded, angrily, brandishing the case in the dumbfounded face he had turned to her.

The ring case was empty!

IV.

His duties over for the present, Clark Wade lost no time in finding Cora and drawing her to one side. He had rehearsed the whole thing a dozen times, but now that he was face to face with the situation he forgot his lines, and could only stumble lamely.

"Cora," he faltered, aghast at his daring. "Cora—I—I—hang it! I want to say——"

"Yes," she awaited, demurely.

"You know it already. I know you do," he sped along. "I've adored you ever since we met. And you're going to marry me. Don't say anything yet," he put up one hand. "I went shopping this morning, and"—he put his other hand in his pocket and brought out a little leather ring case—"and I bought this for you. Take it. You—you know I love you, don't you?"

"Why, Clark," her cheeks reddened, as she accepted the little leather box. "Is—is this for me?"

He drowned her with kisses before he would let her open it. But finally she did.

"Oh, Clark!" she cried, as he again embraced her. Then, freeing herself: "Put it on my fin——"

"Wade!" yelled a stentorian voice, as heavy footsteps approached. "What the devil did you do with that ring?" It was Daniel—and in an unusual mood.

Cora cast one searching look at Wade, then snapped shut the case and squeezed it tightly between her moist palms.

"What ring?" questioned the abashed young assistant.

"What ring!" roared Daniel. "The ring you should have put into the case. What did you do with it?"

The magician's tone alarmed both employees. Cora glanced down at her hands, suspiciously. Could Clark have—but no! He couldn't have. He wasn't that kind. She knew it well.

"Why don't you answer?" demanded the enraged magician.

"Why, I followed your instructions to the letter," protested Wade. "I placed the ring in the case, the case in the box, and the box in the table. Why?"

"Why? When I handed the case to the owner of the ring it was gone. What the mischief could have become of it?"

Young Wade was thunderstruck. "I hope you don't think that I stole it," he contested, hotly, then wished he hadn't, for the magician grasped his arm.

"Pardon me for talking so rough, Clark," he said in a softer voice. "I know you wouldn't do such a thing. But I was so excited for the moment that I didn't know what I was saying. To avoid a row, I asked the lady to come to the stage door right after the curtain fell, and she'll be here in a minute now. What am I to do? She says the ring is worth a thousand dollars, and I don't doubt it. The diamond was a mastodon! You saw it yourself."

"But how could it have disappeared?" queried the bewildered assistant. "She can't be stringing you, can she? You watched her open the case?"

"I was just turning toward the stage when she arrested me," Daniel explained. "She had no opportunity to abstract it. What would have been her object in doing so, anyway? But you're positive you couldn't have dropped it?"

"Absolutely. But you needn't hide yours, Cora," he addressed the girl, who had been mutely listening and watching both men. "Cora and I are engaged," he informed the wizard.

"This is a poor time for congratulations when I'm so upset," Daniel stammered. "But I wish you both the best."

Just as Cora again unclasped the case a knock sounded. No doubt it was the owner of the ring. Clark was starting for the stage door when a cry from Cora halted him.

"Clark! Look!" she exclaimed is dismay. "My ring! It's gone!"

Clark Wade looked in mute astonishment into the empty case.

The knock sounded again.

V.

Wade collected his scattered wits with remarkable celerity, for like a shot had come to him the recollection of the words he had overheard that afternoon at Dalton's Jewelry Emporium.

"I wonder!" he asked himself; then, aloud, he addressed his astounded listeners. "Let me get out of sight," he commanded. "If it's her, let her in, and if you see me hold up my hand like this, keep her here on some pretext or other till I come back. I've got a hunch!"

And he hid himself behind a packing case near the door. Wade did raise his hand, and was out of the door like a

forty-two centimeter shell the minute he was certain the stout loser of the ring would not notice his exit.

Fifteen minutes later he was back, and three men accompanied him. Two wore stars beneath their civilian coats—the third was Mr. Dalton of the jewelry shop.

The taller of the plainclothesmen advanced immediately toward the little group, which had not yet come to terms. At sight of Dalton, the most loquacious of the group—the stout blonde—suddenly became acutely anxious to be elsewhere. She administered to the perplexed Daniel a shove that sent him spinning to the floor, and darted, as speedily as her heavy limbs would carry her, directly into the arms of Graves, the tall un-uniformed policeman.

In a very ungentlemanly manner the officer snatched off her hat and the blonde wig beneath it, and exposed her tightly braided, natural growth of raven black hair.

"Knew you, Kate, the minute you started to run—you've got such a funny stride," he commented philosophically. "This is 'Fat' Katherine," he addressed his pal who had Dalton in tow. "She's wanted in every city she's ever visited—her fingers are so clever," he added laughingly. "Well, what's the game here, Kate?" he asked.

"He squealed, did he!" she shrieked hysterically, pointing to the wilting jeweler—and they didn't inform her otherwise. "I ought to have known he'd play me!" She paid no heed to Dalton's imploring look, but continued ranting.

At young Wade's request the taller sleuth persuaded her to hand over a little leather-covered ring box. Clark opened it and also his pocket knife.

"Pretty clever," he laughed, as with the knife blade he forced down the false top. Pressing this down into the body of the box—it operated on the same hinge as the lid—the case's interior presented exactly the same appearance as before, except a valuable diamond ring nestled in the plush slit. "Pretty clever," the young man repeated, "very clever! She evidently worked it by pressing a spring somewhere near the hinge before she opened it."

"Quite a game, Dalton," he turned to the withered jeweler. "How many of the cases I went for are fixed on this principle?"

"Only the top layer," the crooked jeweler confessed. "We only intended to work it once, and you'll have no trouble with the others if you don't press the secret spring."

"No wonder he didn't have them ready on time," put in Daniel, who was just beginning to comprehend the import of what he witnessed.

"It's risky business, Dalton, to monkey with a magician," Wade aped the stout woman's voice.

"And time for us to be going," remarked the taller sleuth.

"But what gets me is how you tumbled to the game, Clark," confessed the magician, when the others had gone.

"Haven't you been in the magic business long enough to know, Mr. Daniel, that, when you see a ring closed in a case, and a minute later the same case empty, there's trickery somewhere? Cora, in her excitement, probably pressed the spring of hers. That and what I overheard in the jewelry shop this morning was enough. But what if you and I go somewhere for supper, Cora?" he asked the girl, who had just run her arm through his.

"Not till you pry this apart and put what's in it on my finger," she pouted.

"You'll be needing a better salary pretty quick," winked Daniel, as, taking the hint, he went about his own business.

"Midnight and a Mask," by Harry Eastar, is a mystery story which will appear in the next number of this magazine. It will pay you to read it.

X-RAY AS A DETECTIVE

SOME years ago the Argentine authorities had reason to suspect that smugglers in Buenos Ayres were receiving gems through the mails. The police and post-office officials were at first in some difficulty as how to proceed to secure the evidence necessary to proceed against the suspects. Under the Argentine regulations mail matter in transit could not be legally opened, so it was decided to enlist the aid of the X-ray. By this means some seventy registered letters and parcels were examined, disclosing the fact that they contained many thousands of dollars' worth of precious stones. Another instance of the use of the X-ray in the detection of crime was that of a diamond theft in Calcutta, in which no evidence against the arrested person could be obtained. An official familiar with the wiles of the native criminals suggested that an X-ray photograph be taken of the man's throat. This test revealed the stolen diamond. By a trick which the Hindu thief learns after years of severe practice, the fellow had "side swallowed" the stone. Frequently the taking of a photograph has accidentally led to the detection of crime. A curious example of this occurred in Philadelphia a year or so ago. An amateur taking long-distance views from one of the upper windows of a tall office building on Broad street caught the picture of a passing express wagon with a man behind in the act of "lifting" a package from the load.

The thief got away with his booty unnoticed by the driver or anyone on the street, but the photograph, when sufficiently enlarged, identified and convicted him. One of the passengers on board an English liner running to Rio de Janeiro took a large view of the harbor of the Brazilian city, which view included a number of vessels, among others a small yacht. Two men, Linares and Grayson, had gone out in the yacht that morning. Only Grayson returned alive. According to his statement, his companion had fallen from the mast and had been killed; but, as his story was not believed, he was tried and sentenced as a murderer. The trial had been fully reported in the papers, and among the interested readers was the passenger who had taken the marine view. It occurred to him to have his picture enlarged, in order to discover the character of a small dark spot on the sail of the yacht. This, it clearly was to be seen, was the figure of a falling man. The amateur reported his discovery, and as soon as it had been officially verified Grayson was released. A similar timely discovery was made after the village tragedy known as "The Cooper Murder," in Lancashire, England. Cooper, who was apprenticed to a blacksmith named McKenna, was found dead on the floor of the latter's shop, and the coroner's jury brought in a verdict of suicide. A photographer who had been through the village taking snapshots on the day of Cooper's death developed his films, and one of them showed the smithy with a partial view of the interior through the open door, revealing evidence that caused McKenna's arrest and his confession of the murder.

FASHIONABLE THIEVES

By SERGEANT O'BRIEN

AS I sat by my desk the other evening, puffing away at an after-dinner cigar, the thought occurred to me that it might be of interest to know how I came to adopt the detective's profession.

My father was a good mechanic, and during his life our home was one of comfort and plenty. Father died very suddenly, and mother followed him in less than a year, leaving me an orphan, thirteen years of age.

Up to this time I had attended our excellent public schools, and was a fair scholar. But now it was incumbent on me to earn my own living, and school was no longer to be thought of.

I obtained employment at various places for short periods, but had not succeeded in finding steady work. I made but a small amount of money, and was called upon to exercise the strictest economy.

I had heard of a lodging-house where a bed could be obtained for ten cents a night (the only place in the city, then, though there now are plenty of lodging-houses at that price). I did not at all relish mixing with most of the people who patronized the place, for they appeared pretty rough. Nor did I relish sleeping in the beds, which were very far from being clean and sweet.

"Needs must when the devil dives," is an old saying, and though I did not like the lodging-house and its inmates, here I was compelled to put up.

Perhaps, however, in view of the later results, I ought not to complain about this place.

I had not slept there more than a few times, when I overheard that which informed me that some of the lodgers were crooked.

At night I was tucked away on a kind of shelf, something like a bunk.

Well, one night I chanced to wake up after having been asleep for some little time. My attention was attracted by the sound of voices, which I recognized as those of two young, heavily built fellows, who called each other Snoozer and Smudge.

"I tell yer I got a straight 'tip,'" and Smudge spoke earnestly.

"And so yer think der butcher is well greased?" said Snoozer.

"I does," was the reply. "I tell yer it is a big graft. Der gratin's loose; all there is ter do is ter lift er up and drop down inter ther cellar. Then we lights a bit of candle and goes upstairs. The cellar door opens right inter ther shop, and not inter the room back of it. It's jest as easy as tumblin' off'n a log."

"Dem Dutchmen sometimes keeps a dorg," remarked the cautious Snoozer.

"But dis one don't."

"The lay is plain, an' all straight sailin'? No cross-roads with cops on 'em, an' no corners which yer can't see around?"

"Nary. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes."

"Den shet yer peepers and get some sleep, for to-morrer night we'll get nary a wink."

And then I heard no more. The whispering ceased, the two young but adept villains had settled on their plan, and then had gone to sleep as peacefully as lambs. Since then I have learned that sweet sleep can be enjoyed without an easy conscience. Here were these two rascals sleeping peacefully, while I, with certainly a clearer conscience, never got another wink that night.

I was in a quandary. What should I do?

I had been brought up to consider theft as a fearful crime, and remembered distinctly some words once said by my mother, to the effect that the receiver of stolen goods, or one who aided in a crime, or knowing of it was silent, was equally as guilty as the perpetrators.

First I thought of informing Snoozer and Smudge that I knew what they were up to, and thus frighten them.

This plan I eventually followed.

When morning came I intimated to the two villains that I knew something of their design.

The result was one I had not anticipated.

They fell upon me, and gave me a first-class drubbing. When they got through I had a cut lip, a bloody nose, a pair of black eyes, and numberless bruises on my back and ribs.

"Peach, will yer?" snarled Smudge, giving me a final punch. "I guess yer will keep yer tongue atween yer teeth after this. Mind yerself, young innocent, if I catch yer a-meddlin' in our little game I'll murder ye."

Now I have always been possessed of a quick temper. The beating aroused my resentment, and gritting my teeth, I swore to get square with them.

I then played detective. It was a novel business to me, but I managed to shadow them without their being acquainted with the fact.

During the afternoon I saw them inspecting a butcher shop, and at once realized that this was the particular place against which their raid was planned.

After they were gone I entered the place and told the proprietor.

"Dey vos a-goin' to rob me, hey? Vell, I vill cotch me dose fellers, you can bet mit dat for sure," and then, looking at my bunged-up appearance, he laughed heartily.

"I t'ink dot you vos a nice little poy," he afterward said. "If dot vos so vot you tole me, I vill gif you a shob."

Armed with a big club, the Dutch butcher crouched close behind the door separating the shop from the back room, and waited for the appearance of the thieves. I waited there with him, inwardly praying that I had made no mistake; for was not success to give me a permanent job?

Thinking the beating had settled me, the young villains carried out their original plan.

When the butcher rushed out upon them, armed with the club, they showed fight. One caught up a cleaver, and the other an immense knife, and started toward the butcher.

He laughed scornfully.

"If dot club vos nix goot, how vos dot for high?" and he drew out and aimed a revolver at them. "Shonnie, run for der bolice," this last to me.

I darted through the side hall—which opened into the back room—and soon had several policemen on the scene. The burglars, held in bay by the revolver until the arrival of the police, at once caved and were carted away to the lock-up.

And the next morning I bloomed forth as a "butcher's boy."

This incident had given a coloring to my thoughts and ideas, and though I was as happy and contented a butcher's boy as one often sees, I had made up my mind that that was not the business for me when I grew up. I decided on becoming a detective!

It became a part of my life—this idea of some day becoming a detective. I never took home a piece of meat in the basket on my arm that my eyes were not kept continually busy, studying people and faces; finally I became adept enough to spot a pickpocket at first glance.

I was getting to be an excellent amateur detective.

One afternoon—we always closed shop in the afternoon—I read in the paper an account of how the dry-goods dealers in New York City had been robbed by shoplifters. It had been going on for months, it seems, and although smart detectives had been put to work on the case, they could not discover these fashionable thieves.

"My eye!" I muttered to myself, "wouldn't I like to be the one to bust up that little game! If I could only do that, maybe I'd get put on the regular force."

I couldn't help thinking of it. Dutchy came mighty near losing his boy that day, for I'd almost made up my mind to skip and try and spot those fashionable thieves, who, while pretending to shop, were really plying their trade.

"Shonnie"—he always called me Johnny—"Shonnie," said my boss, "yust take dis roast around to number ——— ——— street. It vos a new customer; und vasn't she a pully-lookin' vomans!"

I put the roast in my basket, and started for the place mentioned. It was a fine house, standing on a corner, with the basement entrance on the street. There was also another entrance on the side street, a private one.

I was near the basement entrance when a limousine drove up and stopped before the private one. It was all in grand style, the chauffeur being dressed in livery. He jumped down and opened the door, and there descended from the automobile a lady who was indeed "a pully-lookin' vomans!"

Just then I encountered an old friend at the basement gate. It was the grocer's boy.

"Gee, but ain't she a stunner?" I said.

"Yer can go yer pile on that," was the reply of the grocer's boy.

At that instant the private door opened, and a woman came out.

The two females met at the edge of the step and clasped hands, and then they exchanged a few low, rapidly uttered words. The grocer's boy craned his neck outside of the railing, and a look of surprise came into his face. Then the woman who had just left the house hastily pulled down her veil, while I continued to gaze at them blankly.

"Shoot dat apron, Butch," said the grocer's boy, confidentially, when the mistress had entered the house and the automobile and other woman had disappeared.

"Why?" I inquired.

"'Cause dat woman who pulled down her veil is de wife of Jake Crouch, what runs de 'fence'," was his reply. "She's as pretty as a Katy-did"—referring to the mistress of the house—"but yer can take odds she's crooked."

I delivered the roast and went thoughtfully back to the shop.

"Vat you vas a-groanin' apout and makin' such a fuss?" asked my boss.

"I've got a tooth-ache."

"A toot'-ache! Dot vas not so fery nice. Is it a bad toot', mit a hole in him?"

"Yes."

"Mebbe you hat petter go mit de dentist mit him."

"I guess I had. Give me two dollars, will you, boss?"

"Two dollars! Two dollars for to gittin' a toot' oud? Kommen here, I vill safe you der two dollars—I vill pry id oud."

I declined and, getting the two dollars in my possession, at once departed. Not to go to the dentist's, however—for the tooth-ache was a sham—but to watch the house of the "pully-lookin' vomans!"

I learned that she went by the name of Mrs. Northcote, and passed as a descendant of an English noble family, that she held her head very high, appeared to have plenty of money, and lived in elegant style.

This was very encouraging.

If she had plenty of money, she had no need of stealing, and I could not see how anybody could steal for the love of it.

There was only one thing to be done, to wait and see if the other woman came again, and find out if she really was the wife of Jake Crouch, or find out if the grocer's boy was mistaken.

For two whole days, and twenty-four hours in a day at that, I watched the house. Then I saw the other woman.

When she emerged I tracked her without her being aware of it. Her eyes encountered mine once, but she would hardly have suspected a boy of my appearance.

She followed a very winding course, but finally pulled up at the den of Jake Crouch, which she entered.

I was getting along famously.

The next morning I was in front of Mrs. Northcote's at a bright-and-early hour.

She kept me waiting a long time.

She probably wasn't aware of the intended honor on my part, I told myself.

It was shortly after two o'clock in the afternoon when the auto drove up, and she, coming out, entered it.

I sprang away in pursuit.

It finally paused before the door of a large and fashionable dry-goods house. It was the crowded hour of the day, and I could understand that she selected this particular time, as she would attract less notice.

I saw her enter.

In less than a minute I was before the door.

Putting on a bold face, I entered the store. The clerks glanced at me, and the first floor-walker I encountered eyed me sharply. I got by too quickly for him to stop me, and singling out Mrs. Northcote I edged along toward her.

It was at the lace counter she had stopped, and valuable laces were scattered loosely over it.

Mrs. Northcote stopped at this counter, and began carelessly turning over the laces. The clerks had orders to watch all customers sharply, and I saw one fasten his eye on her. Then I observed a woman just in front of Mrs. Northcote lean across the counter and say something to the clerk in a low tone.

"That is Mrs. Northcote," she said to him.

He had heard of her; the papers had spoken of her beauty in glowing terms, and estimated her wealth in glowing figures.

There was no need of watching her; no more than there would be in watching the wife of the President of the United States. This was the effect the communication produced on the clerk, and he turned his eyes another way. But I only used mine the more sharply, for I had seen this woman who spoke to the clerk entering and leaving the house of Mrs. Northcote. She was playing the part of a "capper."

Every muscle and nerve was sprung to the utmost. I saw Mrs. Northcote glance around. She picked up two pieces of lace to compare them and laid down only one!

I was half-crouched, like a panther ready for a spring. I had the "dead wood" on her and now was my time. I was prepared to dash forward and accuse her when——"

"What are you doing in here, you young hoodlum? Now, let me see you walk Spanish!"

The speaker was a burly floor-walker, and he had me by the ear.

I certainly walked Spanish, or something differing from a fair-and-square American heel-and-toe walk. I tried to explain, but he would not listen, and never stopped pinching my ear until he landed me on the sidewalk.

As I stood there ruefully rubbing my ear—which had begun to burn fearfully—I couldn't help thinking it was rather an undignified way for a detective to be treated. However, I was consoled by the reflection that I had accomplished the chief part of my purpose in having learned of a certainty that Mrs. Northcote was a thief.

But how was I to apply what I had learned?

I determined to go into the store again and try to find the proprietor.

In I went.

I was spotted in an instant as the boy who had been fired out.

"Get out of here!" said a gruff-voiced man, whom the floor-walker had pointed me out to.

Something in the tone and manner caused my heart to bound with joy.

"Are you the proprietor?" I queried.

"No."

"Are you a detective?"

He glanced at me. Perhaps the eagerness in my face impressed him, but, at any rate, he finally answered that he was.

"So am I," I rejoined.

"You?" and he laughed. "You a detective?"

"Yes, and I was spotting one of these shopping thieves when the floor-walker bounced me. I mean it," I said, earnestly, as I saw an amused and doubting expression on his face.

"Who is she? Do you know her?"

"Yes. She travels under the name of Mrs. Northcote."

"You are crazy."

"Mebbe I am. But just you search her and you'll find a piece of lace about her which she just stole."

The detective handed me over to the charge of a floor-walker, and then sauntered carelessly along until he reached the lace-counter. The head clerk at the counter knew who he was and at once came forward.

"Have you missed a piece of lace within the last few minutes?"

"No," he answered, with a startled look. "I don't see how any one could have made way with any lace. I'll have a look, though."

"Well?" said the detective, when the clerk turned towards him a few minutes later.

"We have lost a piece—a piece that is very valuable."

The detective came back and took me aside.

"You are sure she took it?"

"I am," I confidently replied. "She's the leader of a regular gang of 'em."

"Can I trust you?" he asked.

"You can bet your boots you can."

"Then meet me in front of Mrs. Northcote's house at nine o'clock to-night."

"Correct," I answered, and went away.

I was on hand at nine sharp.

The detective was there ahead of me, and had seen one or two women enter the house, whom he thought he recognized as shoplifters.

A few minutes later we were joined by half a dozen policemen, in citizen's clothing. Guards were mounted at the doors on the side street and then three policemen, the detective and myself mounted the steps.

When the girl came in answer to the ring of the bell, she intended to be very cautious in opening the door. But we were too quick for her and, hurling her back and the door wide open, we dashed into the hall and thence into the parlor.

"That is Mrs. Northcote," I said, pointing her out, "and that is the woman who 'caps' for her; and that is the wife of Jake Crouch, the 'fence.' The others I don't know."

The confusion had attracted the attention of some one in the back parlor, and the doors were flung open by a man. He turned pale at the sight of us.

"Gee!" cried the detective, "this is better than I expected. Davis, I know you, and you must surrender," and the detective promptly covered him with a revolver, and kept him covered until a policeman had snapped the bracelets on his wrists.

On the table lay the proceeds of Mrs. Northcote's work that day, and among other articles was the missing piece of lace. Jake Crouch's wife was in the act of bargaining for these things when we surprised them.

They were all taken to the station-house, then a squad of men were sent to Crouch's place, and they bagged him without trouble.

It turned out that Mrs. Northcote was a notorious shoplifter, and the wife of this man Davis, who was a burglar, for whom a detective was then searching. His wife was in reality only a common woman, but she had humbugged everybody to perfection.

It was fully midnight before the job was finished.

And then the detective—who since has gained a world-wide reputation—took me by the hand.

"What is your name?" he asked.

I told him.

"And how can I repay you for what you have done."

"Make a real detective of me!" I promptly replied.

"I will," he answered. "You are too young yet to do much, but I'll engage that you earn your keep," and at once he took me under his charge.

The next afternoon I went to the shop.

"Is dot toot' pulled out?"

"No, it has stopped aching."

"It must have drove you ouder your head, ain'd id?" said my old boss. "Vat for you no come back?"

Then I told him what had happened.

"Vell," he said, when I had finished, "I dinks me dot id is all righd. You vas makin' a pully detective some day."

If success is the gauge of merit, I have verified his prediction. And so now you know the history of my becoming a detective; it was brought about by spotting and breaking up a gang of fashionable thieves.

THE STRANGE CASE OF MRS. ST. LEON

By BEULAH POYNTER

DOCTOR ANDREWS, turning the hospital corridor, came face to face with Nurse Ainslie, who gave a choking cry and fell trembling into his arms.

"Here! here!" the physician exclaimed, not a little startled at such a demonstration from one of his coolest, most level-headed assistants.

The girl drew back with an attempt at apologizing, but her chin quivered so that the words were all but unintelligible, while her white face and dilated eyes informed the doctor something startling had taken place to upset her so violently.

"What is it, Miss Ainslie?" he said kindly, placing his hand on the girl's shoulder. She was a pretty little thing, almost too fragile and delicate-looking to have been placed in charge of the Maternity Ward in the hospital of which Doctor Andrews was head. But despite her size and obvious youth, she had proven most efficient. Never before in her four years of service for him had the doctor seen her lose her composure.

He gently led her into his ante-room and, after giving her a stimulant, succeeded in quieting her so that she could speak coherently.

"Well, my dear, now what is it?" he said, his kind gray eyes studying her pale little face, and noting the nervous twitching of her slim, olive-skinned hands. Two big tears trickled down the girl's cheeks, which she hastily wiped away.

"Mrs. St. Leon is dead," she said in a strained voice.

"I know," said the doctor. "Miss Morgan told me as I came in. You were with her when she passed away, an hour ago?"

"Yes," whispered the girl. She shuddered perceptibly as though an unseen, icy hand had been placed on her spine. Her dark eyes dilated and seemed to stare into space at some unknown terror—monstrous, remorseless in its aspect.

"Why, Miss Ainslie!" exclaimed Doctor Andrews, bewildered at her facial expression, "you've had patients die before—surely the death of a frail little woman like Mrs. St. Leon could not upset you in this manner!"

"It's the way she died," whispered the girl huskily. "She was murdered!"

"Murdered!" repeated the physician, snapping the lid of his medicine case shut and facing the nurse. For a moment he fancied she was losing her mind; but the clear, earnest look in her face quickly dispelled any such ideas. "I don't understand you, Miss Ainslie. Mrs. St. Leon certainly died a natural death. I regret that I reached here too late to be with her at the end. You know as well as I that shortly after she was brought to the hospital we all had serious doubts as to her being strong enough to pull through, and since then she has been steadily failing, though her baby is a healthy youngster. Her vitality was too low to endure the strain imposed upon it. It is regrettable, to say the least, but don't take it so to heart, child, all was done for the little woman that medical science could do, and you are not in any way to blame for her death."

"I am not blaming myself!" Ada Ainslie cried shrilly, "but I know—I positively ksow—that Mrs. St. Leon was murdered, brutally murdered, and that her murderer will never be punished."

"My dear child!" said the physician again, almost doubting her sanity.

"I know what you think," said the girl. "But I am not insane. I was alone with the poor little mother a great deal of my time, and while her lips told me very little, her eyes said a great deal. She was so happy when she first came into the ward, and though she was very fragile-looking, she wasn't ill—it was only after she had been here a while she began to lose vitality. Think back a while, Doctor Andrews, and see if I am not right."

"By Jove! I believe you are. She has been here so long, I had forgotten. But you aren't accusing some one in the hospital of killing her?"

"No—oh, no! She used to tell me of her home and her husband—how she loved her husband. She was only a country girl, you know, of poor parentage—but very sweet and pretty, while her husband was a notable——"

"Yes—a musician—taken up by the Smart Set and lionized."

"He met her at her own home one summer where he chanced to be on a vacation. It was a love-at-first-sight run-away match. They were equals then, it seems, and only after they had come to the city and Mr. St. Leon was taken up by the fashionable set did they become prosperous."

"Dark, foreign-looking chap," said the doctor, studying. "I never liked him."

"He was horrible-looking!" exclaimed the girl, the shudder again shaking her frame. "I loathed him from the first; how she could ever have loved him is beyond me, though I suppose many considered him handsome, with his dark eyes and curly hair, but I looked into his foul soul, and——"

"My dear girl!" remonstrated the doctor. "Do you know you are practically accusing St. Leon of murdering his wife!"

"I am accusing him!" she replied. "He did! He killed her so surely as I stand here before you, and in the cleverest, most diabolical manner ever conceived by a man!"

There was no doubting the girl's sincerity, and that she believed implicitly what she said. Her words recalled to Andrews' mind his first meeting with Maurice St. Leon and the little woman, his wife, whom he had brought to Doctor Andrews' sanitarium three months before her death. The musician, a striking-looking man of a saturnine cast of countenance, had ridden up to the hospital in a huge red touring car, driving the machine himself, and in so awkward and amateurish a manner as to call forth comments from the wife, who was naturally nervous and easily startled. St. Leon had gotten out of the machine, and had lifted the little woman from her seat and carried her bodily into the waiting-room. He was a very tall, slim man, and standing beside him, his wife looked even smaller than she was, a bare five feet of womanhood. The musician had seemed devotion itself to his wife, caressing her as one would a child before taking his de-

parture, while Mrs. St. Leon had clung to him and, bursting into tears, had begged him not to leave her. Doctor Andrews had been a little puzzled at the man's placing his wife in the hospital so early, but his explanation was most satisfactory. As a man in the public eye, he, St. Leon, was often called from the city, also his profession caused him to keep late hours, with the consequence his wife was alone a great deal. She was nervous and high-strung and prone to worry when he was gone, so under the circumstances he had thought it advisable to place her under the physician's immediate attention to remain until she regained her normal self.

The little woman had listened to her husband's recital of her condition with wide, adoring eyes, staring at him, and though she turned strangely pale and visibly trembled at his departure, Doctor Andrews had fancied it meant no more than a wife's sorrow at a separation from her husband. But now, ruminating over events which had taken place in the interim, and adding to them Nurse Ainslie's strange remarks, he found an unwholesome meaning in the man's actions.

He looked up to find the nurse's dark eyes studying him intently.

"Well?" she said, with an enigmatical smile.

The doctor wheeled abruptly and strode to the window, striving vainly to cast aside the suspicions that were taking root in his brain.

"But how?" he muttered half to himself, half to the little woman who stood watching him.

Even as he asked the question a baby's low wail, filled with a peculiar quality not unlike terror, sounded in the distant corridor. The nurse started, turned paler if possible, and passed a trembling hand over her eyes.

"It's the St. Leon baby," she whispered hoarsely. "Her father is with her—she always cries like that when he touches her!"

Before the physician could answer she had darted out of the ante-room, down the long hall, turning the corner which led into another hallway, and to the maternity wards. As though obeying an unseen influence, Doctor Andrews followed her, walking much faster than the occasion demanded.

As he reached the room angry voices raised in altercation reached his ears, mingled with the infant's pitiful wailing. For a moment he hesitated on the threshold, unable at first to recognize Nurse Ainslie's voice, so shrill and unnatural it sounded, then flinging open the door, he strode inside the room.

The group which met his eyes was unusual, to say the least; for the young nurse was sobbing bitterly as she argued with the dark, sullen-looking man facing her. In his arms he held the child, but he held her as though she were some inanimate object of no value whatever to him, but which he desired to keep from its rightful owners. That the infant was pitifully terrified was apparent, for her incessant wailing had developed into a whimper like that of a sick puppy. The man's dark face was livid, his broad, distended nostrils quivered, and his sharp, white teeth bit deeply into his thin, cruel lips.

The nurse who had relieved Miss Ainslie had shrunken back in a corner, evidently desiring to escape taking part in the quarrel.

But it was the two old people standing hand in hand, with white, sensitive faces, wide, tender eyes, and pitiful yearning in their glances which riveted Doctor Andrews' attention. The old man was stooped, and his long hair was snowy white and curly, and though the garments he wore were shabby and pitifully ancient, he wore them with the dignity of the old-time gentleman. The little woman who clung to him was quite as old and snowy as himself, but an indignant fire blazed from her china-blue eyes, and indignation caused her small body to bristle.

As he entered the room Doctor Andrews heard the old man admonish: "Now, now, mother, keep quiet; it'll come right—it'll come right."

St. Leon paid no heed to the physicians' entrance, but turning to the nurse, huddled shivering in the corner, said with poorly suppressed venom: "Will you kindly clothe this child so that I may take her away with me? I'm tired of this young woman's nonense—yes, and the old people's also—and I've no more time to waste, either. Get a move on you, and let me out of here, quick."

"No, no!" Ada Ainslie cried, catching frantically at his arm. "You mustn't—you shan't take the baby away!"

"Miss Ainslie!" remonstrated the doctor.

"Ah!" exclaimed the musician wheeling about and facing him as though noticing him for the first time. The exclamation came through his teeth very like a hiss. "You see what I have to contend with—this young woman insists that I've no right to my own child! I, her father, have no right to my own flesh and blood!"

"Doctor!" sobbed the little white-haired lady, "the child is our flesh and blood also, and we love her. He doesn't—can't you see he doesn't? And my little girl wanted us to have her baby—on her death-bed she prayed for us to have it, not its father!"

"It's true," said Nurse Ainslie, "she made me swear to give the little one to the grandparents, not the father, and I promised—I took my solemn oath, and I'm going to keep it!"

As if to emphasize the girl's statement the baby gave a louder cry, and the father tried to silence her with a vicious shake. Doctor Andrews noted the movement, and his usual mild eyes blazed, though he said nothing.

"This is all rot!" St. Leon said. "The child is mine. I'm able to care for her, and these people aren't. What do a woman's death-bed ravings mean, anyway? By all laws of possession the child belongs to me, and if you try to take her away from me, by God, you'll——"

"Just a minute," said Doctor Andrews quietly. "Perhaps I've a little to say about that. Your wife died under very peculiar circumstances, Mr. St. Leon." The tone in which he made the statement carried an accusation which the man could not help but feel. He seemed to turn a pea-green—and for a moment appeared to have lost his composure.

"Wha—what d'ye mean by that?" he stammered.

"Will you explain, Miss Ainslie?" Doctor Andrews replied, turning to her. It was merely a bluff he was using, as he had no idea what cards the girl held. For all he knew it was only her intense dislike for the man which had colored her opinion of him, though he had always given credence to a woman's intuition. He was not a little surprised at the evident dismay in St. Leon's face, when the nurse, moving away from him a step, drew from the pocket of her gown a thin packet of letters which the musician unquestionably recognized. He swayed and almost dropped his child; but when the grandmother reached forward to rescue the baby, he drew back with a snarl and held the infant closely to him.

Nurse Ainslie evidently enjoyed the effect the sight of the letters had upon the man, for a smile of triumph overspread her face. It was short-lived, however, for the musician reached forward and, snatching the packet from her hand, tore them viciously into bits, holding his child by the bend of his elbow as he did so, and stamping them under his foot, almost before the girl's cry of protest escaped her lips. His heels ground into the scraps of

paper, as though they had life to be destroyed, and the expression on his face was like that of a madman.

"Now!" he laughed. "Now!"

"You beast! You beast!" reiterated the girl. "But I know their contents and so shall every one—the whole world shall know that, by your vile suggestions day after day, you killed that poor little woman."

The musician's laugh only seemed to spur her on. She came closer to him, and her clear brown eyes gazed unflinchingly into his snapping black ones. Then she abruptly turned her back on him and faced the excited, bewildered group.

"Every day this man wrote his wife a letter," she continued, "which we gave to her, thinking it would make her happy and give her courage in her hour of trouble. I was the first to notice how pale and weak she always was after receiving it, but naturally did not associate her condition with the letters. It was only toward the end that my suspicions were aroused. The day before the baby's birth, she drew me close beside her, and begged me if she should die to see that her little one be given to her mother, not to her husband. Then she gave me these letters to keep." The nurse paused and again looked defiantly at the musician. "She came through the ordeal very well considering everything, and she just adored the baby. The day her husband was to come to see her, we took particular pains to make her beautiful, dressing her in her most attractive robe, curling her hair, and even going so far as to put some rouge on her poor pale face. It was pitiful, the attempt she made to appear her old self again, for she was a wraith of the woman who had entered the hospital."

The musician moved uneasily during the recital, shifting from one foot to the other and biting cruelly into his lower lip, but Nurse Ainslie was merciless, once she started on her story she was determined to continue.

"We bathed and dressed the baby with scrupulous care, for the little mother was so anxious that her child would be attractive when seen first by its father. She seemed to fear that he wouldn't love it, and her fears were correct, for he scarcely gave it a glance when he arrived, and only demanded that I leave him alone with his wife!"

"Just what are you insinuating?" cried St. Leon. "That when I was alone with her, I poisoned her—or something similar?"

"Oh, no, no, indeed," replied the girl, a ghost of a smile on her face. "I was within seeing and hearing distance the entire time you were with her——"

"What!" the ejaculation came almost as a threat.

"I heard you tell that frail, helpless little woman to get 'rid of the damn kid, or she could never come home!'"

So startled was Doctor Andrews at the nurse's statement, he scarcely heard the cry the dead woman's mother gave—nor saw the movement the old man made as though his feeble fingers desired to choke the life out of the wretch holding the child in his arms.

"Yes," continued Nurse Ainslie, her hard voice becoming like cold steel. "You told her you had given her her chance all along and you would not 'stand for any more monkey business.' Those were your exact words; they stamped themselves indelibly on my brain, and that is what you have written in the letters you destroyed—every one of them a torturing, soul-sickening threat, demanding the death of the child or she could have no home! After you left that day, your wife clung to me, and hysterically told me everything. How you had rebelled from the first at her becoming a mother, as it would bind you more closely to her, and that you had used every threat conceivable to induce her to destroy her child—even threatening her own life. I saw farther than she did, poor dear, for in reading the letters, which she requested me to do. I read through the lines the threat you used against the child you knew would destroy the mother; and I say, just as surely as I stand here, you murdered her! That murder was in your heart and soul as you wrote every word on those pages!"

The musician laughed, but the laugh was hollow and forced.

"A likely story. Do you suppose any one would believe you? You've no evidence to back it up. Every one knows we were a devoted couple."

"They don't!" shrilled the little white-haired mother. "You neglected Emily shamefully; you wanted to be rid of her to marry a rich society woman. I believe the nurse, I——"

"I'm sick of this!" St. Leon said. "The child is mine, and I'm going to keep her, and there's no power on earth can take her from me!"

The baby's incessant wailing rose above his voice, and proved most irritating, especially so to the father. The group watched him in almost fascinated horror, as he turned to the other nurse still huddled in the corner of the room, and extended the child toward her. As he did so, a strange expression passed over his dark face, his eyes seemed to bulge from their sockets and he shrank back with a cry of absolute terror; for the door behind Doctor Andrews, which he had closed on entering the room, slowly swung open of its own accord as though pushed by an unseen hand—a breath of cold air swept across the physician's face and he sensed rather than heard a faint, rustling sound. That the uncanny feeling which swept over him was experienced by every one in the room was evident, for the women cried out, and St. Leon's terror was manifest. At the same moment the child ceased her wailing, and for the breath of a second hung suspended in mid-air away from her father's arms and the nurse's! Then the little white-haired grandmother gave a cry, and clasped the infant to her heart, sobbing: "Yes, Emily, I will, I will!"

The musician passed his hand over his eyes as though to shut out an unpleasant sight, and muttering hoarsely, "Keep the damn kid, I can't fight ghosts!" rushed from the room.

The old people a little later departed for their home taking the child with them, while the two nurses and the doctor were still debating whether the little mother had really returned to protect her infant, or they had been witnesses of a spiritualistic manifestation and a man's evil conscience.

A MYSTERIOUS SICKNESS

THE mysterious "sleeping sickness" of West Africa, which has been the subject of late scientific investigations, proves to be a form of meningitis, differing from cerebro-spinal meningitis in its chronic and almost fatal character. It is classed with hydrophobia as one of the most deadly diseases known. It is communicated from person to person in some unknown way, beginning with slight listlessness, which passes into coma, and then into death, its duration being from one to six months. Thus far it has been known only among negros.

SKELETON SAM'S OVERSIGHT

By LOUIS SCHNEIDER

"LOOKS like an extra tough proposition for you this time, Borland," remarked Dikes, conductor of the Night Hawk. "They got away without leaving a trace, and while we were hitting a forty-five mile clip, at that. Here we are."

Borland surveyed the express car before him with a critical eye.

"No traces, you call that?" he commented, as he pointed to a shattered door.

"We had to do that to get in," Nerling, the express agent, explained. "Both doors were fastened on the inside, you see, and that's the thing that puzzles us. It might be a good idea to keep an eye on Coyne and Kleinart, the messengers, though how they could have doped and trussed themselves up as completely as they did has got me stopped."

Borland flashed him a look, and then pushed the door back and clambered inside. The others followed, but gave him free way by keeping near the door. Dikes was protesting against Nerling's insinuation that the two messengers might be guilty of blowing the safe whose shattered door gaped at them.

"I won't believe for a minute that they had anything to do with it," he declared.

"How long have these fellows been working for you?" inquired Borland.

"Kleinart has been with us—let's see—eight years or more," replied Nerling, "and Coyne came to us three years ago from the Intercity Electric."

"Steady, are they?"

"Never had better."

Borland nodded and went on with his examination. "This door"—he indicated the one opposite that by which they had entered—"has it been opened since the car came in?"

"No."

"Nor meddled with?"

"No, it hasn't. Everything is just as it was when the car came in, except that we took Coyne and Kleinart into the station first thing. We knew you'd want things left as they were."

"And are you quite positive that the other door was fastened like that?"

"As near as we can tell, yes. At any rate, we had to break in."

Borland examined the door more closely. There could be no doubt but that it had been securely fastened, for it was in splinters.

"The messengers are tied and drugged," he mused, half aloud, "you are clipping along at forty-five miles an hour, no noise is heard, the doors are locked when you pull in, and yet"—he gave the safe a casual glance—"and yet she's cracked neatly open and fifty thousand dollars of the Fordsburg Steel Mills' pay money is gone, as well as some other stuff. What do you make of it?"

"Blest if I know," said Nerling. "Only, I'll say that it's a mighty slick job."

"Whoever turned the trick," asserted Dikes, positively, "sure had the time of their lives getting off at the speed we were making—unless they waited until we slowed down for the limited."

"Yes," observed Borland dryly, "and after getting off they carefully closed the door after them and fastened it nicely on the inside. Quite likely, don't you think?"

Dikes was stumped. "You don't—you don't think that Coyne and Kleinart could have done this, anyway, and then tied and drugged themselves, do you. I won't——"

"Hold on," objected Borland, going on with his examination. "Let's not jump at any of those things."

He worked the car over thoroughly, then making a rough plan of it and jotting items carefully into his notebook as he went. *A* on the plan indicated where the safe stood; *B* and *C* where the messengers had been found; here stood this, there that, and so on around the car. As he came to the rear end, his examination became more careful, and his notes more copious. Especially did the addresses and directions on several packages seem to interest him. Presently he finished and dropped his notebook in his pocket.

"Well," asked Nerling, "any two and two to put together?"

"From what I can make of it," offered Borland, as he protruded his chin and nursed it pensively between thumb and forefinger, "I expect, Nerling, that we'd better see these fellows—what do you call 'em, Coyne and Kleinart?—after all. Keep some of your men here," he added in a lower tone, as he swung out of the door to the ground, "until you can get this stuff unloaded. Let's go to the office."

When they reached the office Coyne and Kleinart, still a bit shaky and altogether uneasy, were brought in. Borland sat with one hand twisted in his hair, seemingly in deep thought, until every one in the room had grown quiet.

"Why did you do it?" he barked at the messengers of a sudden, "and how did you muffle it?"

Both men stiffened as if they had been slapped in the face, and there was anything except guilt expressed by their attitudes. Kleinart was the first to find his voice.

"What the devil do you take us for?" he whipped out, in an angry tone.

Borland straightened up and his eye twinkled.

"Good," he chuckled. "Good! You've got your nerve back. Fifty thousand dollars missing and the doors locked on the inside on a fellow are apt to be disquieting, to say the least. I wanted you to get a grip on yourself. Now, then—to business. There were two of the fellows, you say?"

"Yes," answered Kleinart, and Coyne verified the word.

"What did they look like?"

"The one who did the talking," said Kleinart, "was a slim, jointy sort of a chap, and that's about all we could tell about 'em, it being a bit dark in the car, except in the end where we were at work. He ordered us to turn our backs, and then they tied and doped us. The only other thing that you could tell about him was that he sorter talked through his nose, seemed like."

"That's what I wanted to find out," commented Bor-

land, as he referred to his notes and fell to chuckling. "That's a joke of the first water. Skeleton Sam!—or I'll give it up. Wonder who's with—was with him, I should have said. What was he like?"

"Didn't notice him particular, because he kept back and didn't say anything—not that we heard, at least. Both had masks on, anyway."

"Where were they when you first found out about them?"

"Somewhere near the door, as well as I remember."

"All right. Go on. Tell how they fixed you up."

"After we'd turned one of 'em ordered us to put our hands behind us, and the other tied us good and plenty. Then one of 'em slapped something wet over my face—something the smell of which nearly tore my lungs out at the first breath—and that's all I knowed till we got plumb down here and come to."

Borland nodded. "Where did they come from?" was his next question.

"Where did they go to?—that's what I want to know," put in Nerling.

"Better follow the trail, then, instead of cutting in across lots," suggested Borland. "We might take the wrong direction. Where did they come from, Kleinart, do you think?"

"Search me! We were working in the front end of the car when they showed up, as I've said, and I'll swear I don't understand where they got in."

"Just when did it happen?"

"We'd just picked up speed this side the Clear Creek tank, the 'Nighthawk's' last stop, before it makes Fordsburg."

"Maybe they sneaked in there."

"Well-l-l," hesitated Kleinart, "I—hardly think so. I'm almost sure we had the doors closed there. Didn't we, Coyne?"

"We'd hardly leave 'em open during a stop there," suggested the other.

"Let's see the sheets for the stuff you ought to have out there in that car, Nerling," requested Borland.

Nerling reached over on his desk and handed a sheaf of sheets across.

"Here they are," he said, "but I don't see what good they are going to do you. It won't bring back the loot to look over those bills."

Borland looked at him quizzically, and then slowly thumbed through the sheets.

"Here we are," he announced, after he had turned something like a dozen of the papers. "That fits in to a T."

He flung the sheets back on the desk. "There's only one way of getting away with it, so far as I can see, and I'll bet, too, that they've got somebody out there watching every move we make outside these walls. Have the boys get out the trucks, and have that stuff unloaded and brought inside, Nerling. And another thing: everybody, while you're at work in here, keep mum about whatever Nerling and I happen to do."

The trucks were run out, and the goods checked over and brought in. The routine work of the office went on, and no one made comment when Borland beckoned Nerling to help him, and they together carried a heavy box marked "Books" silently into the office.

"Where's a screw-driver?" asked Borland, after the box had been placed on the floor and the door locked.

With the tool in hand he attacked the fastenings of the box and removed the cover.

"Books!" he chortled silently, jabbing the screw-driver into the heavy, neatly folded blankets which filled the box full up. "Wouldn't they muffle a carefully gauged explosion to a fare-you-well?"

"Well, I'll be——" Nerling stopped short as Borland pulled out one after another of the blankets and piled them on the floor. Halfway down Borland stopped and looked up at the other.

"Not a word, now," he cautioned, "because we don't want any one else to get onto this just yet. Remember, not a squeak that can be heard beyond that door."

He lifted up a bulging blanket and drew out a well-sealed package that made Nerling's eyes start. It was marked with the name of the Lordsburg Steel Mills.

"Good Lord!" was Nerling's comment.

Where the corners of the package had been torn away there could be seen the ends of closely packed banknotes. The seals of the package had not even been broken.

"No need to open it," remarked Borland. "I guess it's all there. Now, let's look farther."

The lifting of other blankets brought to light such packages of valuables as were missing from the blown safe.

"Put this stuff in your office safe here," said Borland, when the bottom of the box had been reached, "and then we'll see if we can't take the fellows as easily as they took the swag."

"Then—you think—that Coyne and Kleinart cracked the safe, anyway?" asked Nerling, jerked from one surprise to another.

"No, I didn't say that. What they told was the truth, I have an idea. I knew right away that they hadn't done it. This is the smoothest kind of a job. No bungling about it. I think I could mighty quick lay my hands on the fellows who actually did the work, but I want the whole bunch if I can get them. Now I'll give you some instructions that I want your delivery truckmen to follow to a dot, and then we'll get busy."

Ten minutes later Borland walked into the lower police station.

"Mike," he asked the sergeant, "who lives at 1817 West Woodlyn?"

"Ask Jerry there," replied the other. "It's on his beat."

Another ten minutes later Borland was in a little grocery on the corner below 1817 West Woodlyn, where a Mrs. Mallory, widow, kept a boarding-house. He prevailed on the grocer to call up Mrs. Mallory and tell her she was wanted at the grocery on business.

"Tell her you've got sample pounds of tea to give away," laughed Borland. "That'll fetch her. I'll pay for the tea."

The widow came and got her tea after a bit, and then the grocer told her the real reason why she had been called—that Borland wished to speak to her.

"Mrs. Mallory," Borland asked point-blank after a look at her frank, open face as they walked aside together, "is there a boarder with you of the name of Klimper?"

"Yis, sorr," she answered promptly. "He's been with me ut'll be nigh onto a month now soon."

"What kind of a fellow is he?"

"What kind of a felly, is ut? Sure, the blissid day long he do be jokin', whistlin', and jiggin' till a person ud think he ud run down entirely, he's that wiggly. Ut's a doctor he's goin' to be, says he."

Borland's smile was one of satisfaction.

"Is any one else staying with him?" he asked.

"There was, till a couple of days agone, when he left."

"Mrs. Mallory," said Borland, "if you're not too busy I'd like to have you go to the police station with me. Jerry Keegan—who stops at a certain kitchen on West

Woodlyn, I'm told—Jerry and I are going to pull off a stunt, and we need your help. Will you go?"

Mrs. Mallory would, and as they walked along Borland outlined to her the plan on which she was to act.

On arrival at the station he called up Nerling.

"Come on," he said. "We'll be ready for you by the time you get here."

Mrs. Mallory did the blarneying act in great style with the men on the express truck as they backed it up to the curb at the rear of the police station.

"Sure, an' ut's not me birt'day yit, that y' shud be bringin' me prisints! What is ut?"

"A box of surgical instruments, for one, this one is, as it says on the cover," laughed one of the men as he tapped an upright box, "and heavy it is, too."

"Och, thin ut's for Mr. Klimper, after all," cried the widow. "Nobody but a doctor wud want such things."

"Right you are. Then there's a box of books, and a—and a—a——"

"An' a what?" inquired Mrs. Mallory.

"A skeleton!" plumped out the other. "It says it on the box in fair red letters, so you wouldn't fail to see it."

Mrs. Mallory emitted a shriek.

"A skeleton! Holy Mither! is ut alive? Wait—I'll go ask Mr. Klimper what does he want done with ut?"

She scampered away as if it had been up her own steps she sped, and returned as they were lowering the last of the boxes to the pavement.

"He says to bring them right upstairs, he stays," she told them, "and be careful not to drop them, he says, or you'll wish you hadn't."

One at a time the boxes were carried up and placed along the wall of a room on the second floor of the station, as Borland, in quite a changed tone of voice, directed that they should be. At last he pretended to sign up for them, and as the men clumped away down the stairs, with Mrs. Mallory chattering volubly at their heels, he closed the door and shot the bolt.

Motioning the silent police that ranged along the wall quietly to their places, he stepped out into the middle of the floor and broke into a breakdown jig that fairly made the boards rattle.

"Fifty thousand dollars!" he crowed hoarsely. "Fifty thousand dollars!"

"Shut up, Jigger, you crazy fool!" warned a muffled voice from within the box supposed to contain the skeleton. "Don't get too gay, or they'll be coming back to join in your joy."

The lids of the two boxes slid upward and were lifted outward at almost the same moment, and two very much surprised men blinked into steady, menacing revolver muzzles.

"Hands up, boys!" ordered Borland. "Never mind those lids. They'll take care of themselves."

"You've got us dead to rights," piped Skeleton Sam, as he elevated his bony hands and broke into a cadaverous grin. "No use getting fussy over a matter like this—not that I can see. I'm done; turn me over. I sure thought that we were upstairs at Mrs. Mallory's, and that——"

He came to a stop suddenly.

"You didn't give anything away when you called me 'Jigger,'" Borland assured him. "What do you suppose I cut up that way for, if I wasn't on? Now we'll go ahead and finish up this job. Jerry and I are going to slip into these boxes, and then they'll be delivered to the given address. They'll prove a surprise, or I miss my guess. I have an idea that whoever came down behind you from Highmoor, and watched the railway station and the express office, hot-footed it for the house when he saw these boxes start. I'm satisfied that I didn't scare him or Jigger any. Who rode behind you from Highmoor, Sam?"

"Nobody," answered Sam promptly.

"Not a very good day for snitching, is it?" asked Borland. "It's a cinch, though, that you didn't express yourself down here."

The other only grinned.

After orders had been given for half a dozen plain-clothes men to hold themselves in readiness around the house on West Woodlyn, Borland and Jerry snuggled into the boxes and were taken to Mrs. Mallory's, and in less than three-quarters of an hour Jigger Nulling and another were keeping Skeleton Sam and his partner company.

"What I hate about it," complained Sam, "is that I gets the other boys caught up."

"That wasn't your fault," soothed Borland. "It was all their own. They were on the same string with you, and when I pulled the string the whole bunch came dragging in."

"How did you know who all was on the string?" insisted Sam.

"I didn't know. To start with, though, people don't generally pack surgical supplies and articulated skeletons in such a fashion that they have to be handled 'This End Up,' as you marked those boxes; nor do they bore holes in the ends for ventilation; nor does a skeleton cause a circulation of warm air through said holes, Sam. Billing yourself through as a skeleton was going a little bit too far, don't you think, Sam?"

"Got the notion into me and just couldn't help it," grinned the other, "but the joke is sure on me this time. How'd you pipe off the swag so quick?"

"Oh—that? Nothing to it." Borland drew his notebook and opened it at certain entries, which he held beneath Sam's gaze. "All three boxes addressed to the same place tipped that off. I rather thought it would be in the small box because you'd be afraid to trust each other with it, just as you were afraid to throw it off the car to any one else, or bill the boxes to separate addresses. I——"

"Well, we might have dropped off, mightn't we?" put in Sam.

"You might have, but you didn't," observed Borland. "To stay inside the boxes and be delivered was your safest play. So far, so good. But you left that end of string for me to jerk you in with, you know. I was afraid, after I'd found out about your being in the boxes, that you'd heard us talking about it, and would try to make your getaway."

"I heard talk going on, of course, but I couldn't make anything out of it. I didn't have an idea that the thing wasn't going through O. K., or you'd have had a different time on your hands."

"It was a smooth scheme, Sam; I'll admit that. And you might have gotten away with it if you hadn't happened to overlook that one point."

"Hang it!" snapped the other. "I've heard enough of that. Spit it out! What was it I overlooked?"

"How did you expect us to think that you'd dropped off the car when both doors were still locked on the inside, Sam?"

Damn it!" barked Skeleton Sam as he brought his fist down on the table before him with a resounding thwack.

Watch for "The Hidden Hertlings" in No. 30 of "Mystery Magazine." It is one of W. H. Greenfield's best stories.

STRATEGY

By A. D. WINGATE

IT is a singular thing—one of the most singular things in the world—to think of what great results hinge on the most trivial circumstances. And in no walk of life is this truth exemplified more frequently than in the detective's profession.

As an instance:

I had of late frequently heard extolled the beauty of a woman bearing the stage name of Lola, who was a singer of ballads at an east-side variety theater.

Happening to pass the theater one evening, I dropped in just prior to the moment of her appearance. Truly her beauty had not been spoken of in terms of exaggeration. She was, indeed, very beautiful.

At the conclusion of her song a large bouquet was flung on the stage. It came from a private box, in which was seated an elderly man, whose dress and appearance betokened his wealth.

She was recalled, and sang again, and I saw her smile an acknowledgment toward the box.

A fancy struck me to see what Lola looked like when off the stage, and I made my way toward the stage entrance. I noticed a carriage drawn up near by, and it struck me that it belonged to the gentleman in the box.

I found the stage entrance guarded by a doorman. I was, however, well acquainted with him, and he permitted me to enter, and I posted myself in a position where she must pass near me in going out.

I had not been there long when I heard footsteps slowly drawing near, and voices in low conversation.

"Well, what do you say, Harry?" asked a female voice.

"You say he has proposed?" came the reply of a man.

"Yes," she answered, and a silvery laugh rippled out.

"There isn't any doubt about his being rich?"

"No. He is accounted very wealthy."

"Then——" he paused sulkily. "I hate to give you up, Lola, even for a week. But I suppose you'd better marry him, though. They say he's got the heart disease—and you'll be a rich young widow before a great while."

"And then it will be plain sailing for us," said the woman. "I'll tell him 'yes,' then."

And with a parting kiss he hung back, allowing Lola to pass out alone, where she was met by James Bristol, a wealthy, retired dry-goods merchant.

Instantly I comprehended the situation. Bristol had become enamored of Lola and wished to marry her, having no suspicion of her true character, or that this man, Harry Evans, was her lover.

I saw her enter his carriage to be driven to her home.

Thinking it all over that evening in the privacy of my room, I wondered whether I had best attempt to enlighten Bristol.

"Pshaw! I'd be a fool to try it," I at last decided. "She'd swear it wasn't so, and the old fool would believe her in preference to me."

I thought no more of the matter until one day, several weeks later, when I saw their marriage announced in the papers. They had been married the day following the conclusion of her engagement

These circumstances, with the lapse of time, had nearly been obliterated from my memory, when they were recalled one day, about a year later, by seeing a notice of the death of James Bristol.

He had died of "heart disease," the announcement stated.

It would be impossible for me to say why I so far interested myself in the matter as to take the trouble to ascertain the precise circumstances of his death. I had a vague desire to know—that was all the incentive I ever knew.

I learned that Bristol had bought an elegant house and grounds on Riverside Drive. He had been found dead in a small summer-house on the grounds by the coachman—stricken down by heart disease.

Wandering about the grounds, I finally approached the garage and struck up a conversation with the chauffeur.

"I fancy she won't break her heart," he said, referring to Mrs. Bristol.

"Why?" I demanded curiously.

"Well, she didn't love him any too well," said the loquacious fellow. "He worshiped her, though. There's a younger and better-looking man who comes sometimes that she likes a heap better."

Instantly my thoughts reverted to her old lover, the variety actor—Harry Evans.

"Oh, well," I carelessly said, "that's not anything. There's many a woman who thinks more of another man than her husband. But it doesn't follow that there's anything wrong."

"No," he answered, and then winked knowingly—as much as to say: "But in this case it is different."

"Did you ever see anything out of the way?"

"Not myself. But you must know that the cook and me's a-goin' to be married, and she can be kind o' free, you know, in telling me what goes on in the house; and she says she's seen the same fellow about the house when he shouldn't have been; that's all."

Now all this amounted to nothing. Had I not overheard that short conversation in the theater, I should not have given this idle gossip a second thought. But the trifling matter of overhearing that short discussion was destined to be the unimportant circumstance on which weighty matters were to hinge.

I determined to obtain a look at the body of Mr. Bristol, and finding out who his undertaker was, I gained admission, with him, to the house. And I made a discovery.

Less than a week after the burial of Mr. Bristol, I saw an advertisement in the paper for a man as chauffeur, and his wife as cook, inserted by the young widow.

Ha! I can understand this. She wishes to get rid of her old servants and take new ones, who have no idea of what had occurred.

Ten minutes later I was at my house, in deep discussion with our cook, Kate, an intelligent Irish girl.

She dressed up in her best, and I attired myself in a very loud suit. We presented ourselves at the residence of Mrs. Bristol. As we entered her presence I thought:

"There's no great sorrow in her face, anyhow."

She had an album in her lap, and had been looking over some pictures.

"Ah!" she said, glancing up; "you've come in answer to the advertisement."

"If you plaze, mum," I answered, and stooping, I pretended to pick up from the floor a man's glove, which I extended to her as I said: "Mayhaps as how you know the owner. Faith, but it's stained with something—blood, is't?"

She snatched the glove quickly from my hand, glanced at it, and then recovering her composure, tossed it carelessly on the table beside her. But I saw she never took her eyes from it or gave me a chance to carry it away again.

She questioned Katy and myself at some length. I made myself appear exceedingly stupid, and Katy did the same. She evidently wanted people around her who were not too bright, and this being the best of recommendations we were engaged.

I found that the cook and chauffeur were already gone, and Katy settled down in the kitchen, and I assumed my position in the garage at once.

When my work was finished for the day I sat with Katy in the kitchen, pretending to read, but in reality with my ears wide open to hear what transpired about me.

The door-bell rang.

Coming into the kitchen afterward, the waiting-maid said it was madam's cousin.

"Her lover," I thought, but said nothing.

I began to furtively eye the girl. It would be next to impossible to take up the espionage I proposed without her being aware of it; and yet I hardly liked to take her into my confidence. Happily she solved the problem for the present occasion by declaring herself very tired.

"If you will go to the door in case anybody rings, I'll go to bed," she said to Katy, who, glancing at me, and correctly interpreting my look, answered in the affirmative. Once she was fairly out of the way, I took off my shoes and softly went upstairs. They—Lola and her cousin—were in the sitting-room where I had seen her. I managed to get near enough to hear what was said, even though they conversed in very low tones.

"You've got your new help?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the widow.

"Have you done well?"

"Splendidly, I think," she replied. "They are both as dumb as can be, though they understand their work, and wouldn't tumble if a house fell on them."

"By the way, I have lost one of my gloves. Have you seen it?"

"Yes, here it is."

I peeped through the crack of the partially opened door and saw him take it eagerly, and a look of relief crossed his face.

"I didn't know what had become of it. Little things, like the losing of this glove, might do us much damage. Hello, here's a spot on it! Blood! I didn't think he spilled a drop. There was none seen on him?" he said, anxiously.

"No!" she answered. "By the way, Harry, did you get me that new crochet needle?"

"No, but I'll do so to-morrow. Where's the handle?"

"In the work-box in my room."

I waited for no more. My espionage was of shorter duration than I had reason to expect. Leaving the house, I hurried to the nearest telegraph office and sent a dispatch to headquarters. In an hour four officers were at my side. I admitted them to the house, and led the way to the sitting-room.

They did not hear us, and were talking in the most loving strain. It fairly chilled my blood to think that it was possible for them to talk so, when the man they had murdered was hardly cold in his grave. We heard them kiss each other, and when we entered the room suddenly, she was sitting beside him, his arm about her waist. They started up at our entrance, and both turned pale.

"John," said Mrs. Bristol, angrily, speaking to me, "what does this mean?"

"Simply, madam, that you and this man here are prisoners!"

"How? What for?" she demanded, in faltering tones.

"For murdering your husband!" I sternly said—"for murdering the kind old man who rescued you from a life of misery and shame, and made you his wife, unworthy as you were."

With a shriek she fell back on the sofa, and there lay quivering and moaning. Harry Evans at first laughed scornfully, and seemed disposed to brave it out. But as he heard my calmly spoken words, and realized that I only spoke what I knew to be the truth, a change took place in him. He never thought of the woman now, he only thought of himself, of how he could escape the penalty of his awful crime. I saw him glance about, and toward an open window, and I uttered a few words to my companions. They started toward him.

His face took on a desperate look, he snatched out a revolver, and fired two shots point-blank at the officers, and then flung himself headlong through the window. After him sprang two of the officers. Evans had fallen awkwardly, and lay sprawling on the ground. One of the officers lighted squarely on him, driving the breath from his body, and placing him *hors de combat*. With the handcuffs on, he was marched around the house, through the front door, and into the sitting-room, where one of the two other officers was engaged in stanching the flow of blood where one of Evans' bullets had entered his companion's shoulder.

"Don't give yourself away!" said Evans to the guilty woman. "They can prove nothing against us!"

"Can't, hey?" I remarked. "Well, we'll see. I've been investigating this case."

The body of Mr. Bristol was exhumed, and a coroner's jury empaneled. And there, while the guilty pair stood by, I sprung the mine, and unraveled the history of their dreadful crime.

"Harry Evans was at your house, Mrs. Bristol, the day of your husband's death. You surreptitiously administered a small quantity of opium to your husband. He complained of feeling sleepy soon after, and you suggested fresh air. He sat down in the summer-house, and there fell asleep."

Here I held up the handle of a crochet-needle, made of gold, and bearing the words:

"LOLA; FROM YOUR HUSBAND."

"Gentlemen, you observe that the needle has been broken. See if you can find it in Mr. Bristol's head."

Instantly the defiant manner of Evans vanished. He saw that the game was up.

With a pair of pincers the missing piece of the crochet-needle was drawn from the old man's head. The present—the token of love he had given her—had been made the instrument of his death.

Most persons know that the skull is not one solid bone, but is divided in three parts. A pin, properly directed

through the place of juncture, penetrating the brain, will cause instant death.

While Mr. Bristol was sleeping heavily in the summer-house, Evans had plunged the needle into his brain, and then broken it off. The fracture at the point of breaking was peculiar; there could be no doubt that needle and handle belonged to each other.

Besides, there was his glove. I had found it—not when I handed it to the woman—but several days before, in the summer-house. At the moment of puncturing the brain, a single drop of blood had spurted upon it.

The glove was proven to be his very easily, and the blood Bristol's.

The evidence could not be gainsaid, and they were committed to answer the charge of murder, although before the day of trial they cheated justice by poisoning themselves.

Thus you see how it is verified that a small thing sometimes brings great results.

On hearing that conversation that night in the theater, and the employment of a little strategy—first in gaining entrance with the undertaker, when the mere accident of touching the head of the dead man and pricking my finger, gave me the clue, and afterward in gaining admission to the house in the character of a chauffeur, led, as you will see, to the discovery of a most hideous crime.

If you want a good laugh, read the coming sketch by John P. Robinson, to be published in our next number.

ANTI-TANK GUN USED BY OUR MEN

IN an article issued by the Committee on Public Information is described the American Army's "anti-tank" gun, as follows:

Far behind our lines, eight or nine miles to the rear, the enemy for days has been hurling gas shells. The whole area back of us reeks with cloudy poison. Our gunners, gas masked and trying to keep the masks on the horses, do their best to help us and return the fire. But many of their guns are dismounted. They are weakening.

Suddenly the artillery preparation against our own trenches begins. It is hurricane fire. We are overwhelmed with steel—a tropic shower of steel, with every drop a bursting shell. Our fighting equipment is a litter of twisted metal. Every few paces men are being torn to pieces. It is more than blood and bone can stand. We are driven into our dugouts.

Then, suddenly as it commenced, the barrage is lifted. We hear the thunder of it pass over our heads, creeping toward our reserves. We know the enemy is coming over. We rush out to meet and stop him—with the machine guns.

The gray wave advances, men running a little way, lurching forward from crater to crater. But they are facing a flying wall of lead. Here and there they begin to drop, always in some grotesque position. The line wavers. There is confusion. We hear hoarse commands. What seems to be open lanes appear in the enemy ranks. Yet they stiffen and start toward us again. The fire-sweep of our machine guns has not lessened. It is increasing. So we are puzzled. Almost instantly, though, we understand.

Tanks!

Sure enough, they are rumbling toward us—great, dingy slugs, steel sided, but jeweled with quick spurts of flame. We have had no time to strew explosives in their path. They are protected by infantry, so we cannot even try to fling grenades into their tractor machinery or loopholes. Our machine-gun bullets spatter harmlessly against their armor. And they are approaching.

But we still have our 37-millimeter gun—the "baby gun" of the infantry.

It is very light. So we took it into a dugout and kept it safe while the foe's shells crashed upon our trench. Now the eight men of the crew rush for it. They slip the cleaning shaft right through the bore and so carry it up and out. It is set up in a twinkling ready for use.

There is a drifting wrack of smoke and dust over the field. In no time the little piece, its flash hidden in a funnel-like contrivance upon the muzzle, is spitting its wicked inch-and-a-half armor-piercing shells into the flock of tanks. Their armor doesn't help them. Our shells will penetrate an inch or more of solid steel and carry their deadly charge of TNT clean inside. Carefully aimed, the gun is speeding twenty-five shells a minute. And it is so accurate they can be placed wherever the gunner likes, almost to the fraction of an inch. Already one of their tanks is stopped, a caterpillar ribband dangling woundily. Another receives a shell right between the eyes, so to speak. It labors a moment, then spills the remnants of its crew, who stagger away for their own lines. The supporting infantry, swept by our machine guns, breaks and runs. The attack is repulsed.

That is Uncle Sam's "anti-tank" gun, the smallest piece of artillery to our forces.

But they don't call it an anti-tank gun in the army. It is entirely too versatile. Its bald official title of "37 mm. infantry accompanying cannon" conceals a multitude of virtues.

One of its chief uses is against machine gun emplacements—the concrete "pill boxes" first developed by the Germans in Flanders during the British attacks of last year, and now universally used over the front. At 1,500 meters a single high-explosive shell, which is a little longer than the armor-piercing type, will go straight through the loophole of a pill-box, destroy its machine gun, and kill the crew. A few more shots will close the loopholes entirely. The "37" will hardly pulverize the whole emplacement—that takes at least a "75"—but it will put it temporarily out of business.

The "37" is also a handy weapon against working parties, observation posts, for enfilading down a trench, and for use, like a heavy machine gun, in the short rushes of an offensive. Ninety-five per cent. of its work is done by indirect fire, when the gun pointer is directed by telephone from an observer, or even two of them, out ahead. Even under these conditions, though it is not an automatic weapon, its mechanism is so simple that it can fire as fast as the Enfield rifle.

The little cannon is issued in threes to each regiment of infantry, in a present proportion of one to each two trench mortars. It is moved to the battle-line by mules, but as it only weighs 175 pounds, including the trail, it can be readily transported by its own crew. Its accompanying ammunition cart carries fourteen boxes of sirteen rounds each.

The "37" is now being manufactured in the United States also. The design is French—Model 1916—developed and improved from a piece first used way back in 1885.

A BEAUTIFUL FIEND

By POLICE LIEUTENANT KELLY

PERHAPS of all the professions in the world, that of a detectives gives as little satisfaction to the persons engaged in it as any other, if not less. You see life in its darker phases so constantly that you cease to put faith in any human being, you become suspicious of everybody.

I know that with myself this suspicious side of my nature has at least done some good, and at a not remote period saved a human life.

I had been sitting at the back window of my residence, my back to the center of the room, my feet perched on the window-sill, and a cigar between my lips.

My gaze wandered about for a while, and then became fixed on the second-story window of the house directly opposite.

Some one was sick there, I knew, from the pitcher and several bottles which had been placed on the window-sill for the purpose of keeping the contents cooler than they would have been inside of the room.

Well, as I sat there eyeing these things, I saw a woman advance to the window, and watched her a little curiously. She held a cup in her hand, which she partially filled from the pitcher. She was a beautiful woman.

I then saw that she glanced toward the interior of the room, probably toward the bed. Seeming satisfied, I saw her lips part with a smile—a smile which seemed to me more like the snarl of a cat as it draws back its lips and shows its teeth. And then she cautiously drew from her bosom a small vial, which she held up between her and the light as if to see how much of the contents remained.

This vial she then uncorked, and I counted one, two, three, four, five drops fall into the cup, and then saw her carefully hide the vial again.

What was contained in the vial? So I questioned myself. Could it be poison?

Then I glanced at my watch; it was four o'clock, and I jumped up and went around and into the next street. As I passed the door I paused to glance up at the house. The door-plate bore the name of "Stone."

The next morning I looked among the notices of deaths in the morning papers, but the name of Stone was not among them.

Sitting by my window the following afternoon, I saw the same woman appear at the window; again she poured something—a liquid, a cooling drink—from pitcher to cup, and again added drops from the vial—six, this time. I was sure of this, as I had hastily risen, and having screened myself, brought to bear on the woman a pair of powerful opera-glasses.

At the same hour the day following the pantomime was repeated, with this difference—seven drops from the vial were added to the cup.

"There is mystery going on there," I said to myself. "I must do something—must discover the truth in some manner. But how should I go to work?"

After dark that evening I sauntered past the house, coughing pointedly at a rollicking-looking servant girl, who was leaning over the area gate.

She did not appear to be averse to a flirtation, and when I turned and came back I paused and spoke to her.

"What a pretty girl," I said.

"G'long, now," she laughed; "faith, d'ye think I'm such a fool as to believe ye?"

"You wrong me," I said earnestly. "Indeed, I have often noticed you here at night, and have longed to speak to you, but I did not dare." This flattered her, and I could see her unbend at once.

"You don't know how much I think of you, nor how I have watched you," I went on; "why, I know almost as much about the house as you do yourself."

"And phwat do ye know?" she asked.

"Well," as if considering, "for one thing, there is somebody sick in the house."

"So there is," she said. And after a while, when I could do so without arousing her suspicions, I asked who?

"Mr. Stone, shure," she said, and having got started, she rattled on for a long time without stopping.

Well, putting together what I learned from her and from people who knew Mr. Stone, I learned that he and his wife were second cousins, and that an aged relative of theirs, in dying, had left them his property between them on condition of their marrying. In case they did not marry, the property was to be held in trust, and the one who lived the longest beyond the period of forty years, was to inherit the whole. The old man had done this to prevent his wealth being divided.

And the cousins had married.

Mrs. Stone had liked her husband, though not loving him profoundly, and he, to all appearances, thought much of her. At least they lived together harmoniously, and Mary, the girl with whom I had flirted, had never heard a harsh or an unkind word pass between them.

But the other woman, the one who wore the square of lace on her head?

No one knew exactly what position she occupied in the house. She had come there about a year after the marriage of the cousins. Mary hinted darkly that "she thought the master liked her too much for a married man," but could not point to a single circumstance corroborative of this suspicion.

Thus much I learned, and there I was absolutely stuck.

But suddenly another idea struck me, and I paid a flying visit to Yonkers, where Stone had resided before coming to New York. There I learned that he had paid attention to, and had been engaged to marry a young girl named Helen Dean, the very woman who wore the lace cap.

I returned to New York in time to take my station at my window near the hour of four.

Again I saw the same scene enacted, except that now there were nine drops.

By watching I saw the doctor when he got out of his gig before the house, and from the boy who remained in the gig to care for it learned the doctor's name and address, and to his house I that night directed my steps.

"Pardon me, sir," I asked, "will you tell me frankly what the disease of Mrs. Stone is?"

He looked sharply at me.

"Why do you ask?" he then said.

"Are you aware that a murder is taking place there?"

"Who are you?" he asked.

I showed my badge, gave him my name, and then he told me that the illness of Mrs. Stone had been a mystery to him. Without a single tangible symptom of disease she was nevertheless gradually sinking into the grave.

"Slow poison!" I said, when he finished.

"I believe you're right," a flash of intelligence coming into his eyes. "That would explain it exactly. But who is administering it?"

"Helen Dean."

"Impossible! Why, you should see how tenderly she cares for poor Mrs. Stone. No—no, it cannot be Miss Dean. Why, man, Mrs. Stone took care of the girl there when she had no roof above her head, and she would not be so black-hearted."

I smiled. I knew the world much better than the doctor did.

"You must let me play doctor; must send me to visit her in your stead."

At last I gained his consent, and in his gig was driven to the door at the hour when he usually appeared.

Mary opened the door, but did not recognize me, dressed as I was.

"I come in place of the regular physician, who has been suddenly taken ill," I said.

"All right, sir; second floor, back."

I went up the stairs, and as I drew near the door, I heard Helen Dean say:

"Here comes the doctor, dear."

When I entered, the beautiful but wicked woman was sitting on the edge of the bed, and looking sweetly down on the pale-faced woman she was murdering.

I looked at Mrs. Stone, so pale and wan, and my sympathies went out to her. I felt her pulse, asked her a few questions, and then asked Helen Dean to go to the kitchen, and bring me back a glass of lukewarm water and some salt.

A cup stood on the little medicine table. I turned my back so that Mrs. Stone could not see me, and emptied a portion of its contents into a small bottle I had brought with me.

Mrs. Stone had complained of a slight soreness of the throat. And when Helen returned I made her gargle the mixture of salt and water, and gravely asked her if it produced a burning sensation. It did. I shook my head sagaciously, and then having caught the Dean woman glancing toward the cup, I was inspired to say:

"One other thing, Mrs. Stone, you must drink nothing but pure water," adding to myself, "Ten chances to one the poison cannot be mixed with water."

I took my leave, and at once went to a celebrated chemist, who made an analysis of the liquid I gave him.

My suspicions were right, it contained poison.

Helen Dean, beautiful as she was, was a born she-devil.

But was Stone, her former lover, leagued with her? I felt sure of it, yet must have some proof.

I then went back to the house accompanied by several companions.

Mary opened the door when I rang the bell. I laid my finger on my lips, and motioning my companions to follow, led the way upstairs, and leaving them outside knocked at the door, and then entered the sick woman's room.

Helen Dean's face paled, that of Stone was flushed to the very roots of his hair.

Throwing back the lapel of my coat, I significantly tapped my shield.

He knew what I wanted, saw that there was no escape, and uttered a hollow groan. The woman was defiant, tried to brave it out, and demanded what I wanted.

"I want you for attempting to murder that poor woman there," and I pointed toward Mrs. Stone.

She knew from my manner that I spoke not lightly—spoke only what I knew to be the truth, and her beautiful face became transfigured with a tigerish look.

"Yes," she hissed, "I did try to kill her, for she has no right to the man I love. I have failed. But I provided myself for such an event. See!"

She clutched at her dress, and tearing off the buttons in her eagerness, she drew from her bosom another and larger vial, and swallowed half its contents before any one was cognizant of what she was about.

"Here—here!" she cried, and sprang to Stone's side and thrust the bottle into his hand; then with a hysterical laugh sank upon the floor. "Thus do I cheat you all!" she snarled.

Stone, cowardly wretch that he was, gazed at her and held the vial in his hands, which trembled visibly.

"What!" hissed the woman, glaring at him. "Are you a coward? Are you afraid? Are you going to let them hang you like a dog? Can you face her now that she knows all?"

All this had transpired much quicker than it takes to tell it, and, close as I was to Stone, I was too late to more than dash the vial from his nervously shaking hand.

Antidotes were promptly given, but were without effect. Before the guilty pair began to suffer much, I had them carried out of the room to where they could not be seen by Mrs. Stone, and in a short while both died in the most horrible agony.

As for Mrs. Stone, she began to recover at once, now that the insidious poison was not day by day infused into her system.

The plan of the guilty pair was plain. Mrs. Stone's death would place him in possession of all the wealth left them, and, being free, he would then marry Helen.

Mrs. Stone has never forgotten the service I rendered her, and only last Christmas I received a small package, on opening which I found an elegant watch and chain.

There will be a large number of very interesting stories in the next number of this publication. Don't fail to read them.

LOSS OF LEG BRINGS RELIEF

R. A. ROBINS, of Salem, Ark., who has for many years been crippled by rheumatism and who moved about in an invalid's chair, was sitting quietly in his chair one Sunday morning recently when he moved his diseased leg very slightly and it broke in two. Surgeons were summoned and the leg was amputated, bringing relief from a condition which had caused trouble to the victim since childhood.

A BEGGAR DETECTIVE

By ARTHUR PALMER LINGARD

SPECULATION as to who had murdered George Judson had long since died out. The murder had been the usual nine days' wonder when Judson had been found dead in a small private room of a hotel of questionable character.

To this room were two entrances, one opening into a hall leading to the barroom, the other into another hall and down a private stairway to the street. The street door was seldom fastened.

Judson must have entered by this door and the murderer likewise, although no living soul had observed the latter enter or depart. At first suspicion's finger was directed toward the proprietor of the place, but as nothing could be proved against him he was released; justly, too, I at the time decided, for I knew in my heart that, although a bad man, the proprietor had never committed this murder.

But who had?

The coroner's jury decided that "he came to his death at the hands of a person or persons unknown."

And this was absolutely all that was known, two years later, by which time the circumstances were well-nigh forgotten. But then one day, in looking over the "Personals," I saw one which it struck me concealed something, and which I read again and pondered over.

TOM—Where are you? I am in distress, and need money. If you don't answer this, I'll tell all I know about that J——n affair. "KATE."

"That J——n affair! What affair was that? J——n! Can it be the Judson affair?" as the murder flashed suddenly across my brain. "Thunder! what a feather it would be in my cap if I could solve this enigma of who murdered Judson. J——n. I'll investigate this."

My connection with the case at the time of the deed had made me acquainted with the names of some of Judson's friends. I chanced to remember the name of one, whom I at once went to see. I found that he had been a warm friend of Judson's.

"Poor George!" he said. "Many a good time we had together. They call him just a little too wild—perhaps he was a trifle fast to suit the taste of a church deacon—but he had a good heart, had Judson. So you're trying to solve the mystery, hey? Well, I'll help you all I can."

"Then tell me, did you and he ever know a woman called Grace?"

"Grace—Grace!" musingly. No."

"Nor Kate?"

"Yes, I know of one who traveled by the name of Kate. Jud knew her well; used to meet her in the place where he was murdered."

"Can you describe her?"

"Yes. Medium-sized, oval face, black hair and sparkling eyes like jet, and—and—I remember there was something peculiar about her mouth when she smiled. What was it? Ah! I remember: one of her front teeth had been filed away on one corner."

The next day I inserted in the "Personals" the following:

"KATE—Meet me at the corner of Broadway and Fourth street, to-night, at ten. TOM."

Full of hope, I that night hung about the designated spot until long after the hour mentioned. But Kate did not appear, nor did she the next night or the one following.

While examining the passenger list of a steamer, and asking questions about the passengers of her last trip, for an entirely different purpose, I had described to me the very woman I was after, this very Kate.

She was traveling with an elderly gentleman who bought tickets for "Nicholas Turner and wife."

Slight as was my grounds for supposing that this was the woman who had advertised in the "Personals," and not knowing for a certainty whether J——n meant Judson, I determined to follow her up.

I took the next steamer for England, and thence followed "Nicholas Turner and wife" to Paris. Here for a time I was at fault, for they had changed the name they had sailed under to "N. T. Howell and wife." But I caught the clue at last, and finally tracked them to Italy—to Rome.

For many days I paced the streets hoping to get a glimpse of my birds, but as time passed on without meeting them I began to feel discouraged. Finally, I determined to do what I should have done in the first place, and went to the office of the police.

I stated the case, and asked their advice toward discovering if they still remained in Rome.

"Better consult Zanfretta," I was told.

"Where does he live?"

I received minute directions, and about three o'clock that afternoon I found myself in one of the dirtiest and filthiest holes I have ever seen. It was a large, massive building, but the rooms were very small and very dirty.

In one of them I found Zanfretta.

I told him who had sent me.

"And what is it you want?" he asked. The purity and accent of the English he spoke surprised me. But I afterward learned that this old beggar had business frequently with such as I, and much intercourse with English-speaking people had given him command of that language.

I described Kate.

"She is in Rome," he said quietly, and yet positively.

"Are you sure?"

"These eyes never deceived me yet—they were blessed by St. Benedict," he said piously, making the sign of the cross.

"But," I said, "is it possible you could see this woman, and remember her so thoroughly, without having had any reason to be interested in her?"

Zanfretta smiled.

"I have long made it my business to note the face of every stranger in Rome."

"Can you tell me anything more of her? Where she lives and how?"

"It is usual at this stage of the business to say how much my services are worth," he said pointedly.

"How much do you want?"

"Say twenty dollars."

"I'll make it twenty-five if you work up the case within three days."

"Done," he said. "Ritta and myself will do it for you," and he patted affectionately the head of a little girl, whom, up to this time, I had barely noticed.

"Does she assist you?"

"Yes, she is a treasure to the old beggar," he said. "Come in three days from now, and you shall learn what you wish to know."

Taking the hint, I at once bade him good-by and took my departure, and went to my hotel, where I at once set about making myself comfortable for the next three days.

"Don't they make a handsome couple?"

The remark drew my attention to two guests of the hotel. The gentleman was tall, well-built, and handsome; his face was finely molded, and a heavy mustache drooped over his mouth. The lady was fairer complexioned than he was, and well merited the adjective—"beautiful."

It was said that providing the consent of the Hon. Ezra Church could be obtained, Thomas Corsa and Lucy Church would be married. With a cigar between my lips, and the blue smoke curling spirally upward on the soft air, I allowed my footsteps to fall in their wake.

Accident alone had shaped my course, for I had no desire to watch them.

Glancing ahead, I saw the form of a beggar before the door of one of the magnificent churches of the Eternal City. Standing beside him was a child—a little girl.

"Zanfretta!" I thought, and was about to turn my eyes from him when I saw his head raised, saw the little girl bend her eyes keenly on some one approaching from the opposite direction. It was a woman, and alone.

Was it Kate?

I shrank back out of sight, but in such a position as to witness what transpired. Zanfretta was supposed to be blind, but he had eyes keener than mine, in truth; and I saw that he was watching the woman, now almost beside him.

Tom Corsa and Lucy were now also near him; he was bending toward Lucy, speaking tender words of love, when I saw him suddenly raise his head. The dark-complexioned woman had uttered an exclamation of surprise.

Corsa started, his fist clenched, his face paled; the dark woman darted at him a meaning look; the child watched the trio intently, and I saw the beggar detective's eyes bestow a keen, transitory look on them, and then his head sank back again, and to all appearances he was the humble suppliant for alms.

Corsa hurried Lucy past the woman whose presence had disturbed him, and on whom he bestowed neither word nor look of recognition. The dark woman entered the church.

I glided forward now, and would have followed the latter but that the eyes of the beggar detective were lifted, and that he made a most significant gesture not to do so. So I sauntered on.

Nothing further of any importance happened until the expiration of the three days, when I visited Zanfretta.

"The money!" he said, in answer, when I asked him what he had learned; nor would he open his lips until he had it in his hands. Then he was communicative enough.

"The woman's name is Kate Smith. She came to Rome with a man named Nicholas Turner Howell. He got tired of her and deserted her a week ago. She is from New York originally. She is well acquainted with the man who, it is said, will marry Lucy Church. Kate sent a note to his hotel and he went to see her. She holds some power over him, or he would never have faced the public in her company. They have been out driving together the past two days. Kate's character is well known, and Miss Church is almost heartbroken, for her father forbids her speaking again to Corsa."

"And how have you learned all this?" I asked in surprise, for I was astonished at his having so soon informed himself about so many minor details.

Again I saw that peculiar shrewd smile cross the beggar's face. "Excuse me," he said, "but that is the secret of my business."

"True. But where now does this Kate live?"

He told me; and thither I at once posted, after arming myself with the proper authority of the law. Making my way to her room, I arrested her at once.

"What for?" she demanded.

"For being concerned in the murder of George Judson," I sternly said. "Your accomplice is also in custody."

"My God, what shall I do?" she cried, sinking down in abject terror.

"I'll tell you," I quickly said. "Make a clean breast of it, for he is seeking to save himself by laying it all on you."

"The coward!" she snapped. "Tries to save himself by sacrificing me, does he? But you haven't accepted him yet at State's evidence?"

"No, I have reserved the chance for you," I answered shrewdly. "Now, out with it. Tell the truth."

"I will," she said solemnly. "This is how it happened: You know I am not a good woman. Well, Jud—poor Jud—fell in love with me. He had lots of money and supported me royally. But I was not true to him, for I loved this Tom Corsa.

"I used to meet Jud in the place where he was murdered. I went there that night an hour earlier than the appointed time, to meet Corsa. Jud had never done so before, but that night he came earlier than the appointed time. He found Corsa there. He and Corsa had been bosom friends, and he called Corsa a treacherous thief and a traitor. Jud was angry and perhaps a little jealous. Corsa was hot-blooded.

"Very few words passed. It all happened quick as a flash, and there lay Jud dead. Corsa and I left the place unseen. Corsa gave me money and sent me West, promising to come after me in a week or so. But he never did. Perhaps the love he professed to bear me was turned into horror when he reflected that I had been the innocent cause of his staining his hand with his friend's blood.

"I never saw Corsa again until I met him here a couple of days ago. And that is the truth."

"You advertised for Corsa in the 'Personals,'" I said.

"Yes. And you saw it then?"

"Yes. Why did you not reply to the answer signed 'Tom'?"

"When I advertised for Tom Corsa I was in distress, hadn't a cent in the world. But that day I met Howell, whom I had made acquaintance with out West. He relieved my necessities and I never looked for an answer, but got ready and came to Europe with him."

It is scarcely necessary to say that I put her confession into legal shape, which enabled me to get a warrant for Tom Corsa. They were both brought back to New York and sentenced to life terms in Sing Sing.

And thus, by the simple circumstance of seeing J——n in the "Personals," was solved a case which had been wrapped in the profoundest mystery.

It is said that "murder will out," and it is a saying which shows new illustrations of its truth nearly every day.

A COAT SLEEVE

The Story of a New York Detective

By G. G. SMALL

CHAPTER FOUR

THE next morning I started off for Philadelphia, as per orders from the chief.

But I must admit that I had little or no faith in that part of the business.

It seemed as though I ought to be in New York to look after the Wilburs.

They, and not the widow, were undoubtedly the guilty ones, and the ones to be caught.

And as for Mrs. Page, I was not alone, as you have seen, in believing her story to be perfectly straight.

But duty is duty; and with the addresses in my pocket, together with the letter from the parson, before spoken of, I set to work.

I first sought the parson and asked him if that was his letter.

"I wrote that letter, yes. Why do you ask? How comes it in your possession?" he asked.

"I am from the New York surrogate's office, and have been sent here to ascertain whether everything is straight or not before letters of administration are granted to this lady as the widow of Thomas Page."

"Oh, I understand."

And the parson took the letter again.

He was a clerical, fine-looking man, of first-class standing, having been settled in one church in Philadelphia for thirty years.

"Yes, that is my letter. What progress has she made in obtaining her husband's property?"

"Very well; only, where everything has to be proven in due form, progress is necessarily slow, you understand," said I.

"Of course."

"You married Mr. and Mrs. Page?"

"I did," said he promptly; and all of my cross-questioning brought out leading facts, which corresponded with Mrs. Page's statement in a most remarkable manner.

"Were you ever appealed to to bring about a reconciliation between them?"

"Once; but my efforts were unavailing."

"Whose was the fault, do you think?"

"I should say his. But, although they have lived apart for many years, he has always been very kind to her, supporting her in very good style. It appears to be one of those strange cases of incompatibility of temper—a natural aversion to close relationship, which we now and then find."

"Does this resemble the couple as they appeared about the time of their marriage?" I asked, handing him the photograph.

"I think so, although of course I can't recall their looks after the lapse of so many years."

"Were you acquainted with one or both of them before uniting them in wedlock?"

"Oh, yes. I knew Page very well, and Miss Filley was a member of our choir.'

"Did you see them much afterwards?"

"Not much. They separated soon after being married, and, with the exception of the time when I attempted to effect a reconciliation, I have met them very seldom. Mr. Page, never since then; and when his wife applied to me not long ago for a letter to the New York authorities vouching for her identity, I really did not know her. So she brought me the certificate of marriage, and soon convinced me that she was Mrs. Page, after which I wrote that letter. I trust there is no doubt entertained regarding her."

"No; only everything has to be proven, you know."

"Certainly. Poor woman, I hope she will get what belongs to her, for she has suffered much; and if worldly goods will be any recompense, she ought to receive the property he left."

"Certainly."

"What a terrible thing was his death."

"Very sad and mysterious."

"Has anything been found out about it yet, do you know?"

"I believe the police have obtained some clues," said I.

"And I pray that justice may be done."

"Amen! Have you, doctor, never visited Mrs. Page since her desertion?"

"Never, for the very good reason that I never knew where she lived. After the separation, she apparently withdrew herself from the world, and probably, on account of her wounded nature, avoided her old acquaintances. At least she explained the matter so to me. And even now she says that if she succeeds in obtaining her husband's property she intends to quit the country and pass the remainder of her days among strangers."

"No one can blame her for that, I think."

"Certainly not."

"And you have no doubt but that she is the widow of Thomas Page?" I finally asked, as I was about to take my leave.

"None whatever."

"Thank you," and I left the parsonage.

This interview confirmed my belief in the integrity of the widow, and the foolishness of following her up in this manner.

Although I have since learned by years of experience that the slightest clue cannot be followed too closely.

But this did not seem like a clue to me then. Rather, it seemed a waste of time, in which the real culprits might escape.

The whole affair was simply a mystery, because no one ever suspected that Thomas Page was a married man.

And because it turned out to be so after his death, I could not see what that had to do with the murder or the murderers.

How very frequent such cases are, where a supposed bachelor dies and a widow turns up to claim his estate.

I have known dozens of them in my time, and so have you, most likely.

"Yes, I have known several. Indeed, I have known as many as three wives coming to the front after the death of a supposed bachelor, and attempting to claim his property. The celebrated Singer case, for instance," said I.

Yes, but he provided for them all, and there never was a kick in the courts.

Yes, such cases are very common; and the only thing that surprised me was that such an astute old detective as Chief Matsell was should seem to draw off from tracing up the real murderers, and shadowing this poor widow, who seemed to be perfectly straight, and legally entitled to what property her husband left, especially after the way he had treated her during their wedded life.

I never had so good a mind in my life to disobey orders as I had after leaving that parsonage. I hated to waste time.

I almost made up my mind that I would not visit the addresses she had given me of where she had lived.

And another thing, and one which mortified me more than a little, was the fact that I had forgotten to ask her present residence in Philadelphia, although, perhaps, I might be able to learn it from some of her former neighbors.

But this was not satisfactory. I had made a mistake which annoyed me, besides making it in a case in which I had no faith.

And when I came to think it over, I saw the hopelessness of expecting to find her present address, for a woman possessing her nature would probably hide from acquaintances instead of apprising them of her whereabouts.

But, on reflection, I concluded to follow instructions to the letter, and so visited the agent of the first house on the list of those she gave me.

He obligingly referred to his books, and then said: "Yes, such a person lived at that number about four years ago."

"You saw her often, of course?"

"Well, yes. I remember her more particularly from the fact that she used to pay her rent, and have me cash a check from her husband."

"Do you remember her husband's name?"

He ran over his cash-book way back, and finally said: "Thomas Page; check on Chemical Bank, New York."

"Do you know where she moved to?"

"I do not; and if I ever knew it has passed entirely from my mind in the multiplicity of business transactions."

At the next address given me, I found the owner of the building, an old Quaker lady, of whom I inquired.

"Yes, sir, such a lady as thee calls for lived in my house some two years ago," said she.

"What sort of a person was she?"

"What business is it of thine, friend?" she asked, looking inquiringly at me over her glasses.

"I am in quest of a lady bearing her name, and I asked you the question to satisfy myself regarding her identity," said I.

"Now I understand thee, friend. Well, Mrs. Page was a very retiring, lady-like sort of a person, going out but little, and having but a little to say to any one. I think she had seen great trouble, and was living apart from her husband, poor soul! And, although he supported her well enough, yet she all the while seemed to be broken-spirited, and would sit and mope away all the time not occupied by her household duties. She was a sad, but very proper person."

"But you have not told me of her personal appearance," I suggested.

"She was of medium size, dark hair and eyes, and before the blasts of trouble came upon her, she must have been very beautiful," said she, with much fervor for a Quakeress.

"How long since you have seen her?"

"At least two years."

"Do you know where she moved to after leaving your house?"

"I do not. I never inquire into other people's business, sir," said she, a little tartly.

That was a dig at me.

But detectives are used to little things like that. They have to inquire and become personal, in order to make points oftentimes.

"I beg pardon; I did not know but she might have told you."

"She did not."

And that settled this interview.

To tell the truth, I left the house feeling a trifle foolish.

There could be no doubt about it. Mrs. Page was all right.

But so long as I was in the business, I concluded to go clear through.

There was one more place to visit, and if I found out nothing new there, I certainly should return to New York and report favorably.

The last address was visited.

It was a tenement house, into and out of which families were continually moving. I despaired of finding out anything there.

But I finally found an Irish matron who had lived there as long as three years, while all the other families were recent comers.

I visited her floor, and asked her if she ever knew a woman by the name of Mrs. Page.

"Oi did," said she promptly.

"Did she live in this house?"

"She did, on the flure beneath me."

"Were you acquainted with her?"

"I war, poor creathur," said she pathetically.

"Why do you say 'poor creature?'"

"Do yez know her?"

"No, but I am trying to find her. Do you know where she moved to from here?"

"Fakes, I do not, but me frind, Mrs. Moriarty, says as how she hurd Mrs. O'Milligan, as is the alderman's sister-in-law, say that ther poor creathur tuck bad wid ther jumps an' war carried off to some crazy house somewhere."

"What do you mean by jumps?"

"An' don't yez know phwat jumps is?"

"I confess I do not."

"Well, how is it when a person says snakes an' all kinds o' things?"

"Was she a drinking person?"

"Divil a toime, for nearly ivery day when I used ter go for me beer, I'd stop ter ask ther poor lonely soul if she'd have a sup, an' divil a sup wud she take."

"Then of course she did not have the delirium tremens?" I suggested.

"Phwat's that? Sure, she was a dacent woman, an' Oi'd have yez understan' that no Italian son av a gun cud come foolin' around her," said she, with much indignation.

"I beg your pardon; you do not understand me. De-

lirium tremens is the same thing that is often called jimjams. See?"

"Av course I do, but don't bother me wid any av yer Italian names. I thort as how yez war inshinervatin' that she had company, when she war a dacent married woman."

"Oh, nothing of the kind. Did she live here with her husband?"

"No, bad luck to him, he left her. So I heard. Indade, she towld me as much herself, though she was seldom spakin' about her troubles. But I used ter give her a bit av me moind wance in a whoile, I used ter tell her as how I'd loike ter see my Jimmy go away from me an' roamin' around loike a free man. Whoop! Oi'd make him think he war a-foolin' wid ther yeasty part av a mule, so I wud. Bad bess ter ther men anyhow. Yez have got ter kape 'em down or they'll put us women down."

She was getting wild over it, and I could understand that her "Jimmy" would have a rough time of it if he attempted to come the fashionable dodge of leaving his wife. She possibly made it warm for him even while living with her; but what would have been his fate had he attempted to desert her?

"Where could I find Mrs. O'Milligan?"

"I'd nor."

"Where does Mrs. Moriarty live?"

"I'd nor. She's moved. I see her at mass ivery Sunday morning."

"And you say that, according to rumor, she has been taken to a lunatic asylum?"

"No, sor. Oi didn't say accordin' ter Rumor—I said accordin' ter Mrs. Moriarty—as was towl av it by Mrs. O'Milligan."

"Very well. How long ago was this?"

"Phwat?"

"That Mrs. O'Milligan told you of it?"

"Sure, Oi t'ink 'twas somewhere about last Christmas, or the wan before last."

"Well, really, madam, you are not very definite," said I, laughing.

"Not very phwat?" she demanded, looking at me savagely.

"Definite; that is, you don't seem to remember exactly."

"Well, phwat's that yer business, anyhow? Who are yez?" she demanded.

"A friend of Mrs. Page, and I am trying to find her," said I, seeing that I had got to get out of the snap somehow, for she was right up and ready."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes; and I am sorry to hear that she has been taken to a madhouse."

"Poor creathur! Sure, Oi war not a bit surproised ter hear it, for she acted many toimes while she lived here as though she had the jumps, and I said ter Mrs. O'Milligan, as used ter live in the flure beyanst, says Oi, 'It's dape worriment she has over that vagabond husband av hers, an' Oi'd give a foive-dollar note ter have a few moments wid the blackguard, Oi'd show him,'" said she, spanking together a pair of red fists as big as shoulders of mutton.

"I would like very much to find this Mrs. Moriarty."

"Oi'll find out for yez next Sunday."

"But I can hardly wait until that time."

"I'd nor then."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said I, coming to a sudden conclusion. "You find out her address next Sunday, and keep it for me, and if I cannot find Mrs. Page before that time, I will come and see you."

"Faith, that's jintlemanly. Sure, Oi'd loike to hear from the poor creathur."

"So you shall if I can find her. But tell me one thing more, so that I may be sure she is the one I am looking for: What sort of a person is she?"

"Well, lave me see," she mused. "She war about me own soize, an' maybe a bit betther-lookin' than Oi am now, fer, begorra, it knocks the good looks out av a woman ter be ther mother av ten children, an' do washin' besides. I shud say she war about forty years av age; black hair and eyes; very quiet loike, with nothing ter say ter anybody unless they spake fust, as I allers did. Now Oi think av it, she had strakes av whoite in her hair."

"Do you think of any other peculiarity?"

"Phwat's that?"

"Any other thing about her that was in any way striking."

"Sure, she hadn't a stroikin' thing about her, at all, at all, or she wud have knocked the livin' blazes out av that owld man av hers."

"You fail to catch my meaning."

"Has yer manin' escaped yez?" she asked, looking at me in astonishment.

"No, no—what I asked you, was there anything else about Mrs. Page that was in anyway noticeable?"

"Sure, she had her own teeth," she added.

"Are you sure of that?" I asked, for then a new idea struck me.

"Sure, did yez iver know wan woman ter fool another woman wid false teeth?"

"No, I must admit that I never did."

"Sure, I niver owned a set in me loife, but I cud tell a false pair a square away," said she; and she looked as though a false set would have improved her very much.

"Was there anything else about her?"

"Plinty av things, sure."

"Anything noticeable, I mean."

"Oh! Well, she war full-breasted loike, an' a dacent-lookin' woman ter look at."

As this seemed to be all the information she could give me, I again repeated my promise of calling on her after she had seen her friend at next Sunday's mass, provided I did not find Mrs. Page before that time; and if I did, I agreed to visit her again and tell all about her.

I felt under some obligations to her, for she was the first one of the lot who had suggested anything to me.

Now I began to see what Chief Matsell might have had in his mind.

If he had any object in having me follow up this business, it was because he thought there was something wrong in the affair; that this woman was not the bona-fide Mrs. Page, provided there really was such a person.

The more I looked at it the more I saw possibilities of fraud.

So I telegraphed to my chief that I was opening a trail, and would not return for perhaps a day or two, at the same time giving him my Philadelphia address.

That night I secured from the directory the locality of all the private and public lunatic asylums in and around Philadelphia.

The next day I began visiting them.

It was a tiresome job, for at all of the private asylums I could get little or no satisfaction, while the books were always ready for me to inspect at the public institutions.

At none of these could I find the name of Eve Page, or anything resembling it.

So finally I got discouraged and returned to New York for the purpose of reporting to Chief Matsell.

"I will fix that," he said. "You must go back to Philadelphia. I will give you a letter to the mayor which will

open every asylum within his jurisdiction. There is more in this than we know for. As for the Wilburs, I am satisfied that they are laying low, and perhaps it is best that they should regard themselves as above suspicion. Come to me in the morning at nine, and then you can take the ten-o'clock train back to Philadelphia. Good-night."

Armed with the letter to the mayor, I returned to Philadelphia.

This letter proved the open *sesame* to all the asylums; or, rather, the one which the mayor wrote at the chief's request, and I had no further trouble.

At one of the public institutions I found a raving maniac, who had been picked up in the streets and sent to the insane asylum by a police magistrate.

What her full name was, was not known.

All that they could ever find out was that her first, or given name, was Eve.

No other could be gotten out of her, and it was even at that a question with the officers in charge whether that was her real name, or one taken by herself, since insane people often insist that their names are something different from what they really are, and they often take ridiculous ones.

Indeed, I have known them to insist upon it that they had no name at all, or that they were either Queen Victoria or some other illustrious personage. It is a common thing.

So the officers came to call her Mother Eve, and so long as it mattered little or nothing whether she had any other name or not, it was never thought of.

Her hair, like other inmates, was cut short, and although at times inclined to be violent and in need of restraint, as a general thing she was entirely passive, and would sit all day long gazing at vacancy.

Her keeper told me what he knew of her, which was very little indeed.

She had been found by the police wandering about the streets, and unable to give any account of herself at all. This was about a year ago, and all that could be gotten out of her was that her name was Eve.

I asked him if I might speak with her, but he said it was against the rules for any but medical men to speak to patients of a second class. Even their friends were not allowed so to do.

Why I became so much interested in this poor creature I never knew.

But for some reason or other I was drawn to her very strongly.

True, she was sitting there like a stone statue gazing into vacancy, never noticing me, or any one else, for that matter; a poor, burned-out hulk, dead yet alive; but still she interested me.

Could it be possible that this was the real Eve Page, and that another was taking her place?

The thought was startling, but yet I could not help believing that this was my chief's idea.

I thought of it for a few moments as I stood there gazing at her, and then a sudden thought occurred to me.

If it was she, indeed, Mr. Rafferty, the belligerent, but good-hearted Irishwoman, whom I had last interviewed, having seen her so often, and known her so well, would be very likely to know her.

So I asked permission to call again, and set off without loss of time to find and take her back with me.

I found her up to her elbows in soap-suds, and in no very angelic mood.

But I gave her some refined blarney, told her a horrible story of my suspicions, and finally induced her to dress and go with me, provided I would leave a dollar with her next-door neighbor to take up her washing where she had left it, and mind her numerous progeny.

This of course I readily consented to do, and after she had changed her clothes, I further astonished her by assisting her into a cab that I had left waiting at her door.

She had probably never ridden in one before in her life, and in spite of the serious business I was engaged in I could scarcely keep from laughing at her antics.

She straightened up and folded her big arms, and gazed haughtily out of the window, being evidently anxious that everybody, and her neighbors especially, should see her riding in so fine a carriage.

Indeed, she was not much inclined to converse, so intent was she in looking out of the window as we rode along, evidently in the hope of seeing some of her acquaintances.

But we finally reached the institution again, and were shown into the ward for incurables, where my interesting patient was, but not until I had explained the nature of my business to the medical superintendent, who kindly accompanied us.

There she sat, in the same attitude and position, in all probability not having stirred an inch since I had seen her last.

I conducted Mrs. Rafferty up to where she sat, followed by the superintendent.

She gazed at her an instant, while I watched her face intently.

(To be continued)

Read our next big feature story. It is fine!

QUEER FOOTWEAR DEVELOPMENTS

THE U. S. Commerce Reports tell of a recent German exhibition of novel war experiments in the way of shoes. Characteristic of the trend of improvisation are the lowing items:

A variety of soles were shown. One line consisted of a mixture of old rubber, canvas and felt, which possessed a certain amount of flexibility but very poor wearing qualities. A wooden sole which could be sewn and therefore used on better grade shoes was a feature of the display. For use on coarser boots and shoes worn by laborers, a metal-bound wooden sole has been developed; for miners and agricultural workers a thick wooden sole with a wooden waist and heel is provided. The so-called "Agfa" sole appears to give the most satisfaction, although all of its ingredients are not known. The fact that nitroglycerine forms an important part in its manufacture, however, has greatly limited its production on account of the need for that article in munitions making.

The "Agfa" sole is said to become tougher in water, unlike leather, and therefore to possess very long wearing qualities.

In the same room was a display of German war-time boots made with a wooden sole, a paper upper, patent leather facings and a paper waist. A metal sole has recently been adopted by certain regiments in the German Army, and a sample shoe equipped with this sole was included with the shoe display.

CURRENT NEWS

A REMARKABLE SAPPHIRE

There is exhibited in the National Museum at Washington a sapphire weighing nine karats, which contains a bubble that appears and disappears with changes of temperature. It is believed that a cavity in the gem incloses a quantity of carbonic acid gas under great pressure. When the temperature is such as to correspond with the "critical point" for that gas, under the particular pressure to which it is subjected in its brilliant prison house, it liquefies and becomes visible as a bubble.

REGAINS SPEECH

Frank Oller, aged nineteen years, of Hewittsville, near Taylorville, Ill., was playfully struck on the back by a companion while eating an apple. He swallowed it almost whole and immediately afterward lost his speech. For several days after he could not talk. His mother decided to take him to a physician. On the way the boy offered her a stick of chewing gum. She did not understand him at first. Exasperated, Frank blurted out: "Here, have a piece of gum." She took it, and Frank has been speaking ever since, just to hear himself talk.

GUM STOPS GAS LEAK

When it comes to resourcefulness leave it to Mrs. Ernest Byfield and Miss Elaine V. Rosenthal, embryo motor mechanics who are fitting themselves for service in the Motor Supply Course, Chicago, Ill.

A little thing like a gas tank leak is nothing to them, even if it does happen way out on a country road. So when they were motoring along and had to stop because of it, Mrs. Byfield suggested that chewing gum would stop the leak, since they had nothing better. It did, but they had to chew 110 sticks, which they purchased at a nearby store, to get the desired effect. Yes, they could still talk and tell about it when they got back despite the stiffness of their jaws.

BIG OYSTERS IN THE NILE

Government engineers constructing a bridge from Boulac to Ghezirch, while boring for the erection of the piers, came across the remains of an old building, on which were found clinging a large number of oysters of a giant species.

Some of them have most perfect mother of pearl. They belong to what is called the Aetheria Nilotica, and traces of this species are to be found all over Egypt, but above the present level of the Nile. Their existence in such places has greatly helped scientists in determining previous courses of the river.

The Nile oyster has some interesting comrades in the Nile crab and the lanistes, a sort of snail, which differs from the ordinary snail in that it has its spiral wound in the reverse direction. It remains to be seen whether this oyster is of an edible nature.

APPEARANCES DO DECEIVE

Muscles don't always bulge. A young woman in a freight office at Butte, Mont., resembles a sixteen-year-old boy in her working clothes. In her "off-hour" dress she is very much a woman, a woman of pleasing appearance. She weighs only 130 pounds, is 5 feet 4 inches tall and has feet and hands smaller than those of the average woman. But when she works! To pick up a 900-pound piano with her truck and run off with it is play for this Amazon, says the delighted foreman.

GIRL'S PICTURE SAVES LIFE

A metal picture case carrying his sweetheart's likeness is credited with saving the life of Lieut. Edward Kester, according to a letter received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Kester, of Everett, Wash. The letter was written from the hospital, where the young man is recovering from his wound. Kester went over with the 91st Division Infantry, and evidently he went over the top with them, for he says, a machine gun bullet made the wound. He was carried to a dressing station by four German prisoners.

BLIND, YET OPERATES

Although totally blind, Marion Kennedy has been switchboard operator for the Trowbridge Mutual Telephone Company at Shelbyville, Ill., for more than fifteen years.

And the management and subscribers think so much of his services they refused to let him resign recently. He tendered his resignation when the company refused to make certain repairs which interfered with his efficient service. A board of directors' meeting was immediately called. They decided to make the repairs and Kennedy withdrew his resignation.

THE FIRST WOMAN WHO USED TOBACCO

The first European woman to form the habit of smoking tobacco was Mary Frith, better known to her contemporaries as "Mall Cut-Purse," who was born in 1565. In her time pockets were not yet invented, and gentlemen carried their money in purses worn at the girdle. "Mall Cut-Purse" early became an adept in the art of cutting the strings of purses without the knowledge of their owners. She wore men's clothing. Later in life she became a highway woman, and held up travelers along the English roads. Despite her dishonest methods of making a living, she was good-hearted, divided her spoils liberally with those in need, and was a devoted adherent to the cavalier cause. In ancient prints she is usually pictured smoking a pipe, and she was undoubtedly the first white female to publicly proclaim her allegience to Lady Nicotine. On one occasion she caused the downfall of a notorious band of what would now be called "white slavers" and rescued a young girl from their clutches. She lived to be nearly eighty, and left a will requesting that the remainder of her fortune be spent in merrymaking at her funeral.

GUM WADS ON SEATS

Gum wads—four to the seat and tons in the aggregate—are being removed from the under sides of Chicago theatre seats. The cleanup was ordered as a health measure by city authorities, who declare that all mouth-inhabiting bacteria find a happy haven in the gum collections. A count in one theatre showed 3,462 discarded cuds, inspectors said.

NEW IDEA IN POTATO GROWING

It is rather curious that practically all over the world the gathering of the potato crop is carried out in conjunction with the destruction of the plant. Lately it has been proved that an enormous increase in the veld may be ensured if the plan of picking the potatoes is adopted. Some interesting tests on the following lines were made in England, with astonishing results. When the potato plants had grown to a fair extent the largest tubers that could be discovered were grubbed up. These were located and taken with as little injury to the roots and shoots as possible. A second gathering of tubers was made after about another month. It was noticed that, after the tubers had been picked, the plants started to grow with a renewed vigor.

ORIGIN OF TOASTS

The custom of drinking the health of the most popular man at the table has its foundation in the ancient practice originated by the Greeks and adopted by the Romans of drinking to the gods.

The Greeks and Romans later began the practice of drinking to each other, and from this arose the custom of toasting living men. But health drinking in its modern form, originating in England in the roystering days of Charles II., begins with the custom of drinking to the ladies or to any woman who happened to be the reigning belle of the court.

Many and various were the quaint customs associated with the toasts of those days. For example, in certain companies of military officers etiquette demanded that the cup should be passed from hand to hand.

In many midnight gatherings of Alsatia gallants stabbed themselves in order to drink with their blood the health of the woman on whom their hearts were set.

HOW "PIN MONEY" GOT ITS NAME

This expression originally came from the allowance which a husband gave his wife to purchase pins. At one time pins were dreadfully expensive, the Book of Wonders explains, so that only wealthy people could afford them, and they were saved so carefully that in those days you could not have looked along the pavement and found a pin which you happened to be in need of as you can and often do today.

By a curious law the manufacturers of pins were only allowed to sell them on January 1 and 2 of each year, and so when those days came around the women whose husbands could afford it secured pin money from them and went out and got their pins.

Pins were known and used as long ago as 1347 A. D. They were introduced into England in 1540. In 1824 an American named Might invented a machine for making pins which enabled them to be manufactured cheaply. About 1,500 tons of iron and brass are made into pins every year in the United States. Which reminds us of the old, often asked but never satisfactorily answered question: "Where do all the pins go?"

ORIGIN OF "OLD GLORY"

Old Glory as a popular name of the American flag is said to have been applied first in 1831 by a Salem (Mass.) skipper named William Driver, who was at that time captain of the brig Charles Doggett.

Captain Driver was a successful deep sea sailor and at the time of bestowing the name "Old Glory" on the flag he was preparing to shape the brig's course to the Southern Pacific.

Just before the brig left Salem a young man at the head of a party of friends saluted Captain Driver on the deck of his vessel and presented him with a large and beautifully made American flag. It was sent aloft and when flung to the breeze Captain Driver christened it "Old Glory." He took it to the Southern Pacific, and years after, when old age forced him to relinquish the sea, he treasured the flag as an old friend.

In 1837 Captain Driver moved to Nashville, Tenn., and he died there in 1886.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities between the North and South "Old Glory" was flung to the breeze every day from the window of Captain Driver's Nashville house. When the conflict began the old flag had to be secreted. It was kept out of sight until General Nelson's wing of the Union army appeared in Nashville, February 27, 1862, when Captain Driver presented it to the general to be hoisted on the capitol. It was run up, and Captain Driver himself did the hoisting. Its name and history soon became familiar to all the soldiers in General Nelson's command, and so was extended by the soldiers to other United States flags.

LOSS OF SPEECH CURED BY ANESTHESIA

Cases where aphasia, or loss of speech, due to shell concussion and other causes, was cured by reducing the patient to unconsciousness, are related in the London Lancet. The first one, if we are to judge by the term "anaesthesia," must have indulged rather freely in the medicine, which was of his own choosing, a good one for the ailment, though, we all admit. A soldier, while in the trenches, was buried in a dugout by an explosive shell, and when taken out he became unconscious. After a few days in the hospital he regained his consciousness, but was unable to speak. One day he was allowed to visit the village with some of his companions, and while there became intoxicated. In this condition he found his voice

Nai M, aged twenty, had severe convulsions from tetanus for three days, and when recovered was unable to speak. He was admitted to Chulalongkorn Hospital and was then anesthetized by ether just enough to induce excitement. At this moment he was asked a few simple questions, such as his name, address, age. At first he tried to utter two or three words with difficulty. Next day he was anesthetized again, but this time he would speak a few words clearly, and after the third trial he regained power of speech completely.

The first case brings to memory a scene in one of Moliere's comedies, which, as recalled, is somewhat as follows: An old peasant is suspected of being a great doctor. A sorrowing father, by dint of cudgelling, persuades him to treat an ailing daughter. This daughter to escape marrying the man she doesn't want, feigns that she has lost the power to speak. The old peasant, doctor by force, is confronted with the case of aphasia. In the depths of his rustic shrewdness he prescribes for his pretty young patient liberal dosings of bread soaked in wine. These were given her, and in about ten minutes she was talking at an astonishing rate.

MONEY BURNED IN STOVE

A stove is not a safe hiding place for a roll of bills, Steve Zabloda, of Cleveland, O., learned the other day when he received $250 from the Treasury Department at Washington for a package of charred bills worth $450. Zabloda had taken the money out of the Woodland Avenue Savings and Trust Company three weeks ago and put it in the stove for safe keeping. When he again looked for his money it had burned to ashes. Customs Collector Gongwer, to whom he appealed, sent the ashes to Washington and received the $250, with the information that only that amount could be identified.

A GUN THAT WILL SHOOT INTO SPACE

In a detailed scientific discussion of the German long-range gun which bombarded Paris last spring, Major J. Maitland-Addison, writing in the *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, takes a peep into the future and considers the possibility of a gun capable of shooting projectiles entirely off the earth into space, a la Jules Verne. The requisite velocity of such a gun is not, he says, so very much higher than what has already been achieved; viz., a muzzle velocity of a mile per second. When we are able to increase this to five miles per second, the projectile, if fired at a suitable angle, will travel around the earth as a grazing satellite, contemplating its orbit between 17 and 18 times daily. With a velocity of about seven miles a second, it will move off into space, never to return.

HORNETS AT DANCE

The quickest one-step ever released was given recently at the home of Miss Mildred Quillin, near Greenwood, Del., when a hornets' nest, gilded and hung in the parlor, suddenly became alive when the room became heated and mingled with the guests who were dancing on the floor.

Miss Quillin was giving an evening party, and as a part of the decoration had hung up a gilded hornets' nest found in the woods by a cousin. It was during the evening while the guests were dancing that the supposedly dead nest became alive, and the room was suddenly filled with awakened hornets.

Some went out through the doors and some through the windows. Anyway, all got out safely and the hornets were driven outside, where they quickly succumbed to the cold weather.

DOGS' TEETH AS COINS

Dogs' teeth are the Papuans' gold, the most valuable of "coins" in their estimation. They purchase weapons, cattle, grain and the crude household utensils with dogs' teeth. Only the front canine teeth, however, are of any value, all the others being worthless.

These quaint coins are threaded on fibers, and when a wealthy Papuan goes trading he brings with him strings of these teeth. The women greatly prize them and make them into necklaces, their wealth and standing in the community being indicated by the number of teeth which compose these ornaments.

The wives and daughters of the influential chiefs wear rows upon rows of them around their necks on every festive occasion. They polish them until they shine like ivory, and they certainly make an effective decoration on a glossy black body.

The men, on the other hand, adorn themselves with rare and beautiful feathers. One necklet shown to the writer was composed of no fewer than 320 teeth, which means that eighty dogs were sacrificed to obtain them.

CUT OFF TOE TO CURE CORN

Jones Forsell, a retired and wealthy farmer of Grandview, Wash., has a new corn remedy. He has a neighbor who is a carpenter. Recently he went over, borrowed a chisel and adjourned to his own back yard. Placing his toe on the chopping-block, setting the chisel between joints and firmly grasping a hammer in his right hand, he cured his corn. "I'm rid of that corn," he told his wife, "but I'm also minus a toe."

INFLUENZA MORE DEADLY THAN WAR

The Bureau of the Census at Washington has published the statistics for forty-six large cities, with a total population of 23,000,000 which show that from September 8 to November 9, inclusive, 82,360 deaths occurred from influenza and pneumonia. Normal deaths from these causes for the same period would be 4,000, leaving approximately 78,000 deaths attributable to the epidemic. From this it appears that the deaths occurring in the forty-six cities with a population of only one-fifth of the total population of the United States is greatly in excess of the number of deaths in the American Expeditionary Forces.

AN INDIAN RELIC

Already rich in historical associations and relics, Petersburg, Va., has added another that will rival in interest the celebrated Pocahontas stone wash-basin which for many years has been one of the attractions of the city, and in which tradition insists the Indian princess performed her daily ablutions. The newly found relic is an old Indian war canoe which, from its age and appearance, might once have been the royal canoe of Powhatan, and have been used by that great chieftain in raiding the early settlers, and who knows but that the celebrated Captain John Smith himself might have once shot the rapids of the Appomattox in this very canoe? This interesting relic was discovered by Mr. J. M. Seay several years ago. Mr. Seay owns the ferry running between Petersburg and the village of Mattoaca (named after Pocahontas—Matoaka being her first Indian name), which is most picturesquely situated on the north side of the Appomattox river at the falls, four miles from Petersburg, and has about six hundred population. Mr. Seay, who is nothing if not a sportsman, forced the rapids of the river on a bright sunny day in April, and when about four miles from Mattoaca, in a wild and isolated spot, shot a terrapin sunning itself on what appeared to be a rock sticking out above the surface of the river. When Mr. Seay went to get the terrapin he noticed that the blood ran into the supposed rock. On investigation he saw that this was hollow, and that it extended about fourteen feet under water. His curiosity was aroused, and he at once went back to Mattoaca, obtained block and tackle, and, with several friends to assist, raised the object from the river to the surface and found that he had a perfectly modelled canoe, cut or hollowed by burning out a solid log twenty-two and one-half feet long, one foot deep, and two feet wide inside. This, evidently, had been water-logged and submerged at that spot for hundreds of years. Mr. Seay is thoroughly familiar with every nook and cranny of this section, and had often before noticed what he had always thought to be one of the many rocks which abound in the water at this point. Recognizing the importance of his discovery, Mr. Seay brought the canoe to Mattoaca, taking measures to insure its preservation. Antiquarians who have seen the canoe unhesitatingly declare it to have once been an Indian war canoe, capable of holding from ten to fifteen warriors.

"BLACK FRIDAY" UNLUCKY DAY IN FINANCE

Several of the great financial panics of the past have commenced on a Friday, and this has given rise to one of the superstitions of the stock exchanges and bourses all over the world—that the sixth day of the week is fraught with ill omen for those engaged in financial operations.

The original "Black Friday" occurred 173 years ago, in 1745, in London. On that date the tidings reached the metropolis that the Pretender, Bonnie Prince Charlie, had reached Derby with his forces. Londoners immediately made preparations to fly from the city, and a wild panic prevailed. It was on that occasion that the Bank of England had the closest call in its long history. The citizens were anxious to take their money with them in their flight, and the Bank of England was besieged by an army of depositors. In that crisis the bank escaped bankruptcy only by the expedient of placing "dummies" in the line to impede the genuine depositors, and by paying bona fide depositors in small coin.

The first "Black Friday" of latter day financial history was in 1866, just about fifty-two years ago, and was due to the failure of one of London's largest banking houses. Three years later Wall Street had a "Black Friday," due to an attempt to engineer a corner in gold. The worst of all financial "Black Fridays" was that of 1873, when, on Friday, September 18, it seemed that the whole financial fabric of the New World had crumbled into hopeless ruins.

DOWN THE GRAND CANYON.

Romantic Indian legends surround the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. The Indians believed it the road to heaven. A great chief mourned the death of his wife. To him came the god Ta-vwoats and offered to prove that his wife was in a happier land by taking him there to look upon her happiness. To-vwoats then made a trail through the protecting mountains and led the chief to the happy land. Thus was created the canyon gorge of the Colorado. On their return, lest the unworthy should find this happy land, Ta-vwoats rolled through the trail a wild, surging river, calling into existence the Colorado.

One of the most stirring adventures in the history of American exploration took place at the Grand Canyon. For hundreds of miles the Colorado and its tributaries form a network of mighty chasms, which few had ventured even to enter.

Of the Grand Canyon, deepest and hugest of all, tales were current of whirlpools, of hundreds of miles of underground passages and of giant falls, whose roaring music could be heard on distant mountain summits. The Indians fear it, says the *Washington Post*. The hardiest frontiersmen dared not attempt it.

It remained for a geologist and a school teacher, a one-armed veteran of the Civil War, John Wesley Powell, afterward director of the United States Geological Survey, to dare and to accomplish it.

This was in 1869, and Powell, accompanied by nine men with four boats, succeeded in proving that there were no whirlpools that were impassable and that there were no underground passages nor cataracts.

But the trip was hazardous in the extreme.

The adventurers faced the unknown at every hand, daily, sometimes several times daily, embarking upon swift rapids without guessing what rocks or in what great falls they might terminate.

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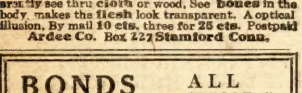

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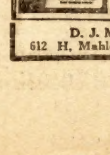

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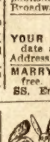

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